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INDONESIAN CINEMA after the NEW ORDER

GOING MAINSTREAM

Thomas Barker

The University of
Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

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Introduction

Indonesian Cinema after Authoritarianism

Prelude

In January 2008, I flew to Jakarta to begin research for what would eventually become this book. Initially, I intended to research the so-called "pirate" film industry that supplied many Indonesians with cheap movies, mostly from Hollywood. Centered in the trading area of Glodok, North Jakarta, the pirate film economy touched all corners of the archipelago. At the time, international pro-copyright bodies the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) were pressuring Indonesian law enforcement to eradicate this trade. However, serious efforts at enforcement risked a popular backlash, and police actions remained largely tokenistic. Indonesian feature films were also beginning to be copied and sold, indicating a hunger amongst audiences for local films. However, an informal agreement brokered between the pirates and the local film industry succeeded (at least for a time) in excluding local films from the pirate trade, demonstrating a flair for patriotism amongst Indonesian film pirates.

During those months, I witnessed police bribes and corruption, experienced uneasy relations between rival Glodok gangs, drank bootleg alcohol with sellers, and saw how piracy intertwined with other illicit economies like drugs and prostitution. Yet, my initial goal of piercing pirate production and distribution networks was beyond my abilities, and I eventually abandoned the research. I next turned my attention to the local film industry. But, just before making this pivot, I interviewed Hanung Bramantyo, a young director whose soon-to-be-released film *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*Verses of Love*, 2008) was already circulating on pirated copies (someone in the editing room had reproduced and released a production cut of the film). I met Bramantyo in Citos, an upmarket café and restaurant mall in South Jakarta, where we talked about his film, the pirated version, and his experiences as a filmmaker. He was largely unperturbed by the pirate release of his film, and instead had much more to say about the state of filmmaking in Indonesia. On its official release, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* broke a long-standing box-office record when it was watched by more than 3.7 million people at the cinema, defeating arguments about film piracy damaging sales. More importantly, the success of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* showed that local films were at the forefront of pop culture and attracting huge audiences and earning

big profits. Something quite monumental was happening in local production, and I was there at just the right time to research it.

For the next nine months, I researched the burgeoning Indonesian film industry attending press preview screenings and interviewing over fifty film industry personnel including directors, scriptwriters, and producers. 2008 marked a decade since the fall of the New Order regime, and over that time local film production had grown exponentially. In the wake of the 1997–1998 Financial Crisis and the fall of President Suharto, film production had effectively ground to a halt as old industry players became inactive, projects were abandoned, and production reached a nadir when only one feature film—*Jelangkung* (*The Uninvited*) directed by Rizal Mantovani and Jose Poernomo—was released in 2001. Yet the end of the New Order catalyzed new modes of expression and cultural production which proliferated across a range of media including fiction writing, journalism, short film, music, and fashion. Feature filmmaking by contrast took longer to gestate, and production was sporadic due to higher production costs and the difficulties of long form filmmaking. Slowly over the subsequent decade, young filmmakers adopting an indie approach to making movies that were experimental in content and production methods made feature films that found audiences and began to make money.

In fact, I had been in Jakarta in February 2002 when a new film called *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (*What's Up With Love?*, Rudi Soedjarwo) was creating significant excitement in the media and amongst young Indonesians. Intrigued I went to the cinema to watch the film during a midday screening. The cinema was packed and young Indonesians reveled in the high-school love story of Cinta (Dian Sastrowardoyo) and Rangga (Nicholas Saputra) on screen, as they spoke in Jakartan slang, and dealt with real life issues. With a hit pop music soundtrack and smart marketing, followed by a television series of the same title, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* laid the groundwork for future productions that were not only connecting with their audience but leveraging the networks and formats of the already vibrant post–New Order pop culture. Between 2002 and 2008 young filmmakers kept making films, and by bringing audiences back to the box office, they regularized Indonesian films as part of the broad cultural diet. Many films are now profitable and filmmakers and crews can make a career in the film industry. By 2008 there were two new Indonesian-made films in the cinemas every week.

It was clear that Indonesian cinema was integrating with prevailing forms of mainstream pop culture while adapting techniques of mass production already evident in television and advertising. Creative labor and production companies from other sectors were moving into feature film, enmeshing film in existing domestic networks of cultural production and promotion. Cinema created a new roster of stars and contributed to Indonesia's growing celebrity culture. Films now regularly include pop songs in their soundtracks and feature local musicians as cast members and in cameo appearances; these have included Fedi Nuril from the rock group Garasi, all five members of the Bandung rock group Changcuters, and

dangdut singer Dewi Persik. Sequels and remakes are becoming more prominent, including *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* (*Verses of Love 2*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2017) and *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta? 2* (*What's Up With Love? 2*, Riri Riza, 2016) as recent examples. Gossip television and other media cover the film industry, looking for the latest scoops on upcoming productions, celebrities, and insider rumors. New film releases have become spectacles featuring celebrity appearances and endorsements from public figures, with cross-platform marketing to entice potential audiences to the cinema. A variety of genres now proliferate, catering to multiple tastes: mainstream horror and romance films now play alongside more serious biopics, historical dramas, and art cinema titles. Not only is Indonesian cinema vibrant, productive, and popular it is now firmly in the mainstream.

While these developments have been a cause for celebration in most quarters, not everyone has welcomed these developments positively. Many observers have lamented the commercialization of the film industry,[1] likening cinema post-1998 to the popular cinema of the 1970s and 1980s when money-minded producers were said to dominate. Yet this perspective is simplistic: it not only over-emphasizes the power of commercial producers it more importantly fails to account for the broad structural changes in Indonesia after 1998. Democratization, decentralization and liberalization have expanded the market as an economic mechanism and devolved political power from a few to the many. Cinema is no longer shaped by the state and its interests, as it was during the New Order, but is now subject to a market in which the state is only one of a group of competing interests and forces that include capital,

Figure 0.1: Fans swarm the stage to see the stars of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2* (*Verses of Love 2*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2017) at Grage City Mall in Cirebon, West Java in December 2017. Photograph courtesy of Volker Photo Studio (Cirebon).

1. See, for example, Nova Chairil, "Looking at Both Sides of the National Cinema," *The Jakarta Post*, April 28, 2010; Adi Wicaksono, "'Dosa Asal' Film Indonesia," *Kompas*, March 2, 2007, 51.

consumers, and interest groups within the general public. Old frames of reference and discourses reducing film to narrow categories, as either a national cinema or a commercialized mass cultural product no longer work.

Of vital importance in the post-1998 era are the audiences who now play a greater role as taste, fashion and identity driven consumers rather than the singular mass as they had been conceived as previously. Prior to 1998, audiences were either assumed, ignored, unseen, or untheorized, and the little research that was conducted reduced their consumption preferences and patterns to a function of income level. With film's integration into the broader pop cultural landscape, new consumers and consumption patterns come into existence in the post–New Order market economy. Audiences are attuned to trends and fashions and filmmakers must respond to these demands. In the market era, audiences increasingly determine the fate of a film and therefore the financial returns that flow back to filmmakers and into subsequent production. Acknowledging the importance of audiences and their consumption patterns is concomitant with the post-1998 democratic era in which the citizenry has a stronger voice in the political process. Audiences still mattered before, but they now take on a new significance in the market era because of the economics of the film industry, its integration into prevailing modes of pop culture, and the emergence of market segments based around identity driven consumption.[2]

Increased film production has tracked the growth and consolidation of the new consumer economy and market for media products and entertainment in post New Order Indonesia. The first decade of *reformasi* was marked by considerable growth with the proliferation of new publications, communities, and outlets catering to new consumer segments based on factors like geography, subcultural affiliations and other demographics and interests. National television broadcasters increased from the five allowed to operate under the New Order to ten,[3] with many more operating at the provincial level. By 2007, over 65 percent of households had a television, up from 54 percent in 2000. In the second decade to 2018, as the market stabilized, market rationalization has occurred, reducing the total number of outlets, at the same time as large media conglomerates increase their presence in the media sector through business expansion, consolidation, and rapid diversification.[4] As film has integrated within this media system and consumer market, the changes in Indonesia's dynamic media sector since 1998 warrant closer examination.

This book argues that the recovery of the Indonesian film industry after 1998 was a process of going mainstream. Focusing primarily on the period between 1998 and 2010, this book examines significant films, events, people, and decisions that brought Indonesian cinema from its nadir and location on the cultural periphery

2. Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore and Kyoto: NUS Press and Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies, 2014).
3. Yanuar Nugroho, Dinita Andriani Putri, and Shita Laksmi, "Memetakan Lanskap Industri Media Kontemporer di Indonesia" (Jakarta: CIPG dan HIVOS, 2012). http://cipg.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MEDIA-2-Industri-Media-2012.pdf.
4. Nugroho, Putri and Laksmi, "Memetakan Lanskap Industri Media," 33–50.

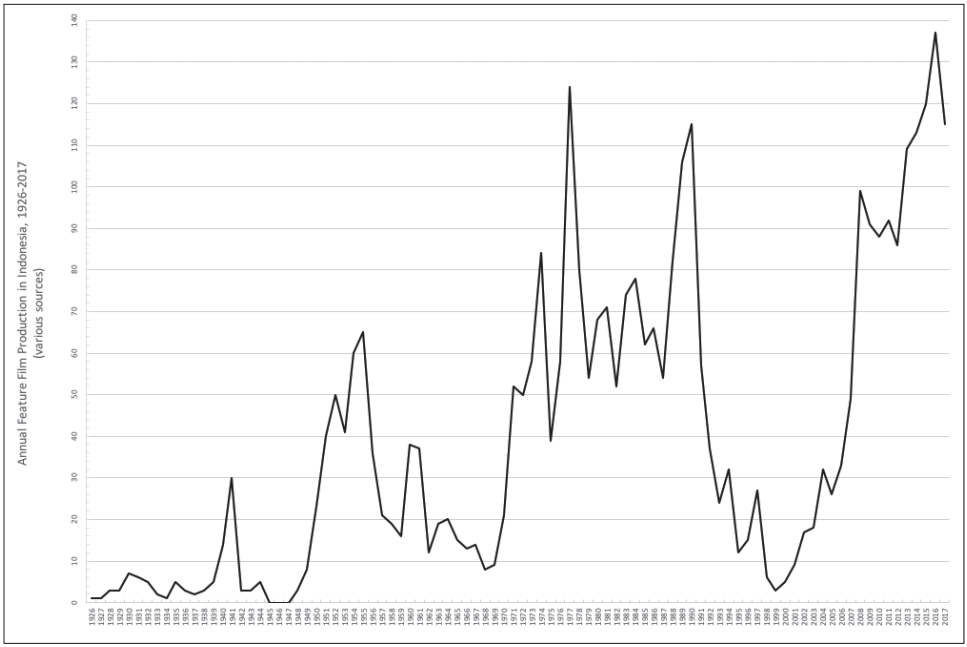

Figure 0.2: Annual film production in Indonesia, 1926–2017

in the late 1990s into the mainstream where it now enjoys domestic popularity, commercial profitability, and increasingly global attention. In order to integrate with prevailing modes of mainstream pop culture, the film industry adopted new production techniques, developed audiences by revitalizing genres, managed interactions with the state and its regulations, and adapted to new exhibition paradigms. On one hand this book details the economics and sociology of film production, circulation and distribution. It asks who is making films, how are they making them, and the production conditions in which they are created. Here we see how indie film production morphed into an industry and the complications and negotiations that went with it. At the same time, the book explores genre and film content to see how the interests of filmmakers and audiences are represented on screen. Here, filmmakers tapped into emerging trends and fashions popular amongst Indonesian youth. By combining new modes of production and new modes of audience engagement, Indonesian cinema has emerged as one of the most dynamic pop culture industries in Asia, increasingly integrated into global flows of capital and media products.

Thinking about Indonesian Cinema

Given such significant changes have occurred in Indonesian cultural production since 1998, new ways of thinking about cinema are not only possible, but essential. Old models and approaches to understanding Indonesian cinema have become

anachronistic and cannot adequately explain contemporary cinema. This book sees cinema as a form of pop culture since studying cinema is no longer just about cinema, but goes to broader questions around cultural production, regulation and the state, industry infrastructure and political economy, as well as social change. Indonesian cinema is not just a national cinema with no relevance to film and pop culture elsewhere: rather, the experience of Indonesian cinema and the debates in that country today provide insight into the global phenomena of pop culture and our understanding of it. The recent experience of cinema in the nation has as much to tell the world as the world has to tell Indonesia.

Studies of Indonesian cinema to date can be categorized into three approaches—national cinema, state cinema, and *reformasi* cinema. Locally, the dominant approach to studying Indonesian cinema has been through a national cinema paradigm I have previously identified as *film nasional*.[5] *Film nasional* is best represented in the work of the two most prominent film scholars of the New Order period, Misbach Yusa Biran and Salim Said. To them—and to those who have adopted or share their perspective—Indonesian cinema is an extension of nationalism in both economic and cultural terms. This is expressed in the oft-quoted slogan "*film Indonesia harus menjadi tuan di rumah sendiri*" (Indonesian film must become the master in its own house), which aspires to a vision of Indonesian films dominating local cinemas.[6] At the same time, proponents of *film nasional* advocate for a particular kind of Indonesian film, namely those made by filmmakers who approach filmmaking as an art form, driven by idealism, and who show the "real Indonesia." Instead, they argue that most films have been produced by commercially-minded filmmakers for mass appeal, and present vulgar fantasies that merely ape foreign culture.[7] In their view, audiences are the victims of cheap marketing who need to be educated and encouraged to watch "quality" films. Seen through a perspective of *film nasional*, the history of Indonesian cinema is thus another history of the conflict between film-as-art and film-as-commodity.[8] For them, the state's role is to regulate the commercial industry, and protect and promote national cinema.

Studying film as methodologically national aligns with a nationally bounded market, under national regulations, by citizen filmmakers addressing themes and issues of national concern. To some extent this is a logical way of studying cinema, but often embedded in the national cinema framework are assumptions or prescriptions of national culture and identity. National cinemas tend to promote certain filmmakers at the expense of others, and assign value to films that are seen to best

5. Thomas Barker, "Historical Inheritance and 'Film Nasional' in post-Reformasi Indonesian Cinema," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.7_1.
6. See, for example, Umar Kayam, "Filem Indonesia Menjadi Tuan Rumah di Negeri Sendiri," *Kompas*, January 15, 1979.
7. Sjumandjaya, "Films in the Hands of Petty Bourgeois," *Prisma*, no. 7 (1977): 28–31.
8. For example, see Patrick Campos, *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2016), 1–27.

represent the idealized nation rather than critical or even popular works.[9] As the work of Benedict Anderson and others tells us, nations are imagined communities and any ascribed national culture must itself be an invention.[10] Yet descriptions of national cinemas invariably become prescriptive when certain cultural practices, political beliefs, and interpretations of history are taken as normative, even if the actual films themselves offer much more complex readings of history and identity.[11] In reality, nations are riddled by debates, contestations, and contradictions over identity and history, bringing into question the ability to identify a stable object we might designate as "Indonesian Cinema." Film industries are also deeply embedded within global forms of exchange and interaction, meaning no national film industry is ever isolated from developments and influences from regional and global pop cultures.[12]

The second prominent strain of Indonesian film scholarship was much more critical in its approach and saw Indonesian cinema primarily in its relationship to the state. Krishna Sen wrote the most comprehensive study of Indonesian cinema during the New Order (1966–1998) and suggested in *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* that cinema could be understood as a site of conflict between creative expression and state control.[13] What was allowed or disallowed, and what was possible, was refracted through the ideological and institutional constraints imposed by the New Order regime. Because of the New Order's hegemonic power, cinema became a reflection of the state (both in terms of its ideology and its political economy) through mechanisms of regulation and censorship, control, and ownership. With the film industry under state control, the opposing paradigm was one of resistance or opposition, showing how filmmakers evaded or challenged state strictures, such as through satire or flouting the regulations.[14] For Sen, Indonesian cinema history after 1966 is the history of how it became thoroughly imbued by the ideological, regulatory, and economic imperatives of the New Order regime.

After the end of the New Order in 1998, both the *film nasional* and the statist approaches fail to explain contemporary Indonesia cinema. As new forms of filmmaking and filmmakers emerged in the *reformasi* era, they neither faced a hegemonic state nor felt attachment to the ideals of *film nasional*. To account for these changes a third category of *reformasi* scholarship has emerged documenting the

9. Yingjin Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).
10. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
11. Dag Yngvesson, "The Unconscious Is Structured like an Archive: The 'Epic' Politics of Postmodernity in Indonesian Cinema," *Plaridel* 15, no. 1 (2018): 67–104. http://www.plarideljournal.org/article/the-unconscious-is-structured-like-an-archive-epic-politics-and-postmodernity-in-indonesian-cinema/.
12. See Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam, "Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema and Global Change," in *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood, and the New Global Cinema: No Film Is an Island*, ed. Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 1–34.
13. Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994).
14. Barbara Hatley, "Cultural Expression," in *Indonesia's New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-economic Transformation*, ed. Hal Hill (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 216–66.

post-authoritarian era. *Reformasi* scholarship grappled with the changing landscape of film production, including Leila Chudori writing for *Tempo* magazine and filmmaker Garin Nugroho writing on media.[15] One of the first comprehensive studies of the *reformasi* period came from Katinka van Heeren who documents the emergence of the indie cinema movement, dedicated to cultural and political expression, and implicitly resistant to the state in the book *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past*.[16] Subsequent work from Ariel Heryanto describes emergent forms of pop culture,[17] emphasizing social conditions that allow for new expressions of pleasure and identity. In the context of *reformasi*, the lifting of state restrictions and its accompanying new freedoms gave young Indonesians space to express themselves, unhindered by oppressive state agencies or restrictive regulations.

As feature filmmaking proliferated, there have been efforts to revive *film nasional* by decrying the commercialization of the "national cinema" and extolling filmmakers to use their work as a platform to promote nationalism or artistic idealism.[18] This is largely in response to the perceived loss of certainty and nationalist sentiment that has accompanied *reformasi*, democratization, and the market era. Although sharing the euphoria of filmmakers in the 1950s following the end of colonialism, young filmmakers do not share the sense of nationalism that accompanied independence, having emerged from thirty-two years of domestic authoritarian rule. Instead, their struggle in the early years of *reformasi* was more practical as they sought to express themselves while remaining independent from the state and the commercial industry. New generation filmmakers such as Edwin, Yosep Anggi Noen, and Mouly Surya who might be called "idealists" prefer to leverage their opportunities on the international film festival circuit, which provides funding, prestige, and international exposure. Following in the footsteps of internationally renowned director Garin Nugroho, their films seek to challenge domestic mainstream audiences whilst appealing to the sensibilities and tastes of foreign festival audiences. Even as more market-minded filmmakers turned to commercial producers for production capital, their films still engaged with questions of national identity and cultural values in popular genres such as horror and romance. As Goenawan Mohamad remarked in 1974 in response to similar debates about national identity in film: "our face is revealed there. It may not be that intelligent, deep, or respectable, but so what."[19]

15. Garin Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2005); and Leila S. Chudori, "Hasil Perdana Kuartet Sutradara Muda." *Tempo*, December 7, 1998.
16. Katinka van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film: Spirits of Reform and Ghosts from the Past* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2009). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004253476.
17. Ariel Heryanto, ed., *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*.
18. Ekky Imanjaya, "Idealism versus Commercialism in Indonesian Cinema: A Neverending Battle?" *Rumah Film*, 2009, http://old.rumahfilm.org/artikel/artikel_neverending_1.htm.
19. Goenawan Mohamad, "Film Indonesian catatan tahun 1974," in *Seks, Sastra, Kita* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1980), 89. "Secara tak langsung wajah kita tampak di sana. Mungkin tidak terlalu cerdas, tidak terlalu dalam dan tidak terlalu terhormat, tapi apa boleh buat."

Even as Indonesian cinema has grown in international profile either at international film festivals including Busan, Rotterdam, Shanghai, and Cannes, as well as through international co-productions and international distribution, it is often reduced to an iteration or subclass of Asian Cinema. This serves to reproduce existing cinema studies paradigms which emerges out of Euro-American scholarship in which Hollywood is the global benchmark and industry of reference. Following the success of Gareth Evans's action film *The Raid: Redemption* in 2011, there has also been a growing interest in Indonesian new action stars Iko Uwais and Joe Taslim and the ultra-violent films of the Mo Brothers (*Killers*, 2013; *Headshot*, 2016; *The Night Comes For Us*, 2018). Yet even this new action cinema tends to frame Indonesian cinema through its exoticism and much of the complexity and context of post-authoritarian Indonesia is thus unappreciated and cannot be equated with stylistic or thematic similarities with films from South Korea, Thailand, Japan, or Hong Kong. Indonesia's growing stature in the global cultural circuit is not matched by a deepened understanding of Indonesia specifically or of its domestic film industry.

New ways of understanding post-1998 Indonesian cinema are required to replace previous anachronistic and overly simplistic models. Approaching Indonesian film as a form of pop culture allows us to account for both the importance of cinema's entertainment qualities and its role as a profit-driven, commercially orientated cultural industry. This book is interdisciplinary and incorporates cultural studies and sociology as much as it does work in contemporary film studies to analyze the return of film production in Indonesia by understanding it as a process of "going mainstream." This represents a new approach to the study of Indonesian cinema which complicates the nationalist and state-centered approaches in previous work by engaging with market-orientated work post-*reformasi*. It recognizes how feature films have integrated with local pop culture, including emerging cultural trends and commercial forms of cultural production, and puts the audience and the market at the center of its considerations. To understand film as pop culture is to understand the complicated relationships between filmmakers, capital, the state, audiences, and broader Indonesian society. As the Indonesian film industry has expanded in terms of output, audience figures, visibility, and international reputation, it has invariably become mainstream.

Popular Cinema of the New Order

In returning to mainstream appeal, Indonesian films of the 2000s occupy a similar position in the cultural landscape as Indonesian films did in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there are structural, organizational, and thematic differences between the cinema of the New Order and the cinema of today. I will be marking this difference by defining mainstream cinema of the New Order as popular culture and mainstream cinema of the post New Order as pop culture. This is not merely semantics, but is a means to theorize the shift from the New Order to post–New Order cultural

economy and explain why in the 1990s Indonesian cinema was no longer mainstream. Popular cinema of the New Order imagined a mass national audience, was defined through national frames, and was a cinema of the people. After *reformasi*, as cinema became mainstream again, it integrated with other entertainment industries, including promotion and marketing, with an audience that is now skewed towards the youth, and subject to market forces. Characterized by rapid turnover, and close attention to fashions and trends, contemporary Indonesian film is qualitatively different to the cinema of the New Order. There are similarities and continuities such as the horror genre being a staple, but the production, content, marketing, and audience, are very different.

If we follow the fortunes of Indonesian film production since its inception in the 1920s, the 1970s and 1980s represent a most golden era. Over these two decades, annual film production reached new peaks, cinema was a staple part of people's cultural diets, and the film industry was a prominent part of everyday life. Film producers operated in familiar genres such as comedies, romance, and horror for a mass audience, aided by state censorship and content policies which imagined the audience as a generalized, singular mass. In this context, film could be described as mainstream popular culture. Not only were Indonesian films well-liked and well-patronized, their themes and content reflected the interests of a majority of the population. Following Raymond Williams, Indonesian cinema constitutes popular culture not just because it was "of the people" but because it was conceptually contrasted with "high culture."[20] In cinema, high culture refers to art cinema or films made by "artist" filmmakers, which in Indonesia was defined and promoted by proponents of *film nasional*. As popular culture, cinema was a source of anxiety for proponents of *film nasional* who considered popular films to be vulgar, crass, and thoroughly commercialized and its audiences needed to be encouraged to watch "quality" films. This debate between popular cinema and "quality" cinema characterized debates around cinema during the New Order and helps us define mainstream Indonesian cinema of the period as popular culture.

Indonesian cinema's connection to the popular was evident in what anthropologist Karl Heider saw as the creation of a "national character" on the cinema screen.[21] Although dismissed by serious critics from Misbach Yusa Biran to Teguh Karya,[22] popular cinema incorporated personalities, jokes, mannerisms, and cultural references that could be broadly defined as Indonesian. In this way, cinema represented a broad mainstream culture offering entertainment to a majority of the population. Iconic genres, titles, and stars of Indonesian cinema emerged from this period of relatively stable production. Five big actors in the 1970s—Roy Marten, Doris Callebaute, Yati Octavia, Yenny Rachman, and Robby Sugara—dominated

20. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 236–38.
21. Karl G. Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991).
22. Teguh Karya, "In Search of Ways and Means for Making the Film an Instrument of Expression," in *Histories and Stories: Cinema in New Order Indonesia*, ed. Krishna Sen (Melbourne: Monash University, 1988).

the popular cinema of the late 1970s earning up to 5 million rupiah per film. Suzzanna became an icon of the horror-mystical drama with her roles in *Ratu Ilmu Hitam* (*The Queen of Black Magic*, Imam Tantowi, 1981) and *Sundel Bolong* (*Whore with a Hole*, Sisworo Gautama Putra, 1981). Local comedies were defined by the Warkop DKI comedy trio who made thirty-four films between 1979 and 1991 and Betawi musician-comedian Benyamin S who acted in seventy-four films between 1970 and 1992.[23] Operating under restrictive conditions, the domestic film industry still managed to be the entertainment of choice for millions of Indonesians, offering a range of genres from action to horror, campus love stories to historical drama.

Indonesian cinema as popular culture was similarly evident in the practice of film consumption since watching film and going to the cinema are widely enjoyed cultural practices in Indonesia. Films were censored so that anyone from the general population could watch them. Going to the cinema was largely a family or communal experience, and where there were no fixed cinemas, mobile screenings called *layar tancap* were held periodically. *Layar tancap* were operated by touring operators who would set up a projector and screen in a public square or field and screen films at night. These were often sponsored by local officials or businesses, and were sometimes held in conjunction with wedding celebrations; they brought together the whole village or neighborhood for carnivalesque occasions, with food and trinket stalls and other forms of entertainment. People came together to mingle, socialize, and hang out. Cinemas were located across the archipelago in towns and cities and served a broad national audience. This was a cinema for everyone.

Figure 0.3: *Layar tancap* as presented in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (*3 Prayers 3 Loves*, Nurman Hakim, 2008). Image courtesy of TrixImages.

23. Warkop DKI are a comedy trio consisting of Dono, Kasino, and Indro active in various forms from the early 1970s to today. Warkop is a contraction of Warung Kopi meaning "coffee stall." DKI is an abbreviation of Daerah Khusus Ibukota (Capital City Special Region), a reference to Jakarta.

Indonesian cinema of the 1970s and 1980s was the most visible form of popular entertainment. Films drew inspiration from other cultural forms such as novels, comics, radio plays, and sometimes copied overseas titles as is common in film industries across the world. The racy American drama *The Blue Lagoon* (Randal Kleiser, 1980) for example was remade as *Pengantin Pantai Biru* (*The Bridegroom of Blue Beach*, Wim Umboh, 1983) with Merriam Bellina and Sandro Tobing in the lead roles. Film magazines including *Ria Film* and *Majalah Film* provided gossip and insider news from the industry. Television broadcasting which began in 1962 was possible competition for cinema, but with only the state broadcaster TVRI in operation it was primarily propaganda and educative content, rather than entertainment. Although cinema competed with radio and television, it occupied a preeminent position in the nation's mainstream popular culture. Official audience figures have never been reliable due to the informal nature of the film business and under-reporting to avoid paying tax and royalties, but anecdotally and from reports and writing at the time, Indonesian film was the top entertainment of choice at the cinemas throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1970s, Indonesian films accounted for about 50 percent of tickets sold at the box-office.

Tastes were however beginning to shift and fragment in the 1980s as a domestic middle class grew in cultural and economic importance. They were less inclined to consume Indonesian films and preferred imported products that matched their aspirations and lifestyle orientation. Produced as a result of New Order economic development, the middle class became increasingly visible in the big cities of Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Bandung, and Denpasar and in the consumption spaces catering to their new consumption patterns. Shopping malls were built in Jakarta such as Glodok Plaza in 1986, Pondok Indah Mall in 1991, Blok M Plaza in 1992, and Plaza Senayan in 1996, offering middle class consumers access to lifestyle products, status markers, and taste segmentation.[24] Within these air-conditioned shopping malls, new modern multiplex cinemas offered the latest audio-visual technology in comfortable surrounds, with tickets priced accordingly. Indonesian films struggled to access these cinemas in part because they were not catering to the taste profile of these audiences and could not match the technical quality of Hollywood films which from the mid-1970s had shifted to the high-budget blockbuster model.[25]

Local filmmakers lacked the resources and income to respond to these changing market conditions because economic and structural conditions of the film industry hindered their ability to innovate. As most producers were located in the Jakarta area, they relied on a network of brokers to distribute their films to regions where the majority of their audiences lived. Brokers paid a flat fee for distribution rights which guaranteed producers a set income but did not reward them for producing successful films and discouraged risk-taking or investment in higher production values. Moreover, industry players found their market share decreasing and their

24. Lizzy van Leeuwen, *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle-Class Jakarta in the 1990s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
25. Toby Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).

ability to generate income reduced when the film industry came under the influence of Suharto crony Sudwikatmono, who monopolized film imports in the late 1970s before cornering the exhibition market through his Cinema 21 chain of theaters in the 1980s. Over time, this led to a decline in income and revenue, a stagnation in production, and compounded by an inability by the film industry to respond to changes in audience tastes and interests. Without access to middle class consumers, income for Indonesian film producers steadily declined.

Filmmakers were further stymied by the New Order's corporatist political economy which had made the representative organizations of the film industry largely docile and compliant to the state. The film industry was structured to support the New Order's organicist mode of governance by bringing the various industry representative bodies into a forum relationship with the Department of Information. Organizations such as the Indonesian Film Producers Association (PPFI, Persatuan Produser Film Indonesia), Indonesian Cinema Owners Organization (GPBSI, Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia), and Film Importers Association (AIF, Asosiasi Importir Film) representing producers, cinema owners, and importers respectively, subordinated their own interests for the sake of national objectives such as order and development. Under an authoritarian regime which practiced cronyism, critical problems could not be adequately discussed and resolved for fear of upsetting the regime. This entrenched a conservative establishment who maintained the status quo and were wary of radical or critical viewpoints. Young Indonesians who wanted to become filmmakers were subject to onerous accreditation procedures to socialize them into this prevailing work culture, further limiting new ideas and innovative filmmaking practices.

Although the Indonesian film industry continued to provide entertainment for a mass audience into the early 1990s, it had effectively stagnated and was merely recycling old ideas and tired concepts. Concurrently, media industries both locally and globally were beginning to change with globalization and the proliferation of new technologies such as videocassette and satellite television. With the introduction of private television broadcasting in 1989 and its subsequent rapid expansion, the media landscape in Indonesia changed dramatically, multiplying the amount of available content and entertainment options to the country's population. Private broadcasters were more attuned to capturing large audiences by giving them what they wanted. Selling these audiences to advertisers, private television stations generated incomes that dwarfed anything that a feature film in the cinema could earn. Local cinema declined in popularity as audiences shifted to television en masse along with many producers and filmmakers who made the new television content. The few remaining producers in feature film production turned almost exclusively toward *filem esek-esek* (sex films) in a failed attempt to regain audiences.[26] Local

26. Sexual content had been used in popular films since the 1970s, but in the 1990s it had become much more explicit in film titles, posters, and taglines. The films of the 1990s were similar to Category III films from Hong Kong, which often played in the same cinemas, although less explicit because of Indonesian censorship requirements.

films moved from the mainstream to the periphery and declined in number, quality, and visibility, throughout the 1990s.

Pop Culture as Youth Market

In this book I conceptualize contemporary Indonesian cinema as pop culture, rather than as national cinema or as popular culture as it has been previously imagined in the Indonesian context. Understanding Indonesian film as pop culture focuses on two attributes that help explain the return of the Indonesian film industry after 1998: the audience and changing consumption patterns, and the product and new modes of production linked into other media industries. Rather than seeing the audience as an undifferentiated mass, we need to see the audience as composed of segments who respond to the market of cultural goods based on taste, fashion, trends, and their need for identity-based consumption expressed through desire and pleasure. Likewise, films as products cannot easily be divided into the "quality" and the "commercial" but need to be seen as expressions of production relationships and negotiations between different interests. Using pop culture rather than popular culture is to further differentiate the era of mass culture associated with the twentieth century, with the current era in which consumption patterns interact with the relationships between capital, the state, producers, in a commercialized and liberalized marketplace.

As Chua Beng-Huat has previously shown,[27] pop culture refers to mass-produced entertainment aimed for broad consumption in modern market-based capitalist societies. For Chua, this has become the predominant form of culture in circulation today, replacing not only traditional culture but more diverse than the homogenized products of "mass culture."[28] Most pop culture is produced and circulates through modern media forms such as feature films, music, television programs, and comics. In addition, pop culture is characterized by a rapid turnover of products which in turn drives a constant search for newness in the latest fashions and trends. Whilst pop culture appeals to the broad population, its primary consumers and trendsetters are the youth who have disposable income to spend and who use pop culture to define and shape their identities. Viewed through the lens of pop culture, the trajectory of Indonesian cinema after 1998 becomes much clearer, but it requires a historical understanding of the emergence of the youth consumer segment since the 1970s.

In Indonesia, the emergence of market driven, youth focused pop culture, did not go unnoticed, but was seen as a worrying development that threatened the quality of art and national culture. Such sentiment was captured in a 1977 edition

27. Beng Huat Chua, "Conceptualizing an East Asian Popular Culture," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5 (2004): 200–221; Beng Huat Chua, "Return to/of the Political Popular in Cultural Studies in Asia," *Situations* 9, no. 1 (2016): 1–19.
28. Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

of the national academic magazine *Prisma* which lamented the rise of a new phenomenon it called *budaya pop* (pop culture) because it came at the expense of more traditional and nationalist art and culture. It saw new forms of writing, new genres of music, and the popularity of comics as signs of shifting consumer tastes towards entertainment that was pleasurable and light, discussing issues such as romance or growing up. Literature, comics, music, and radio were much more responsive in capturing new youth interests and producing content compared to the film industry which was much more focused on the mass popular market, rather than on the new youth segment.

One of the antecedents of this youth segment can be traced back to the establishment of Radio Prambors in Jakarta. Set up in the late 1960s, and formally licensed in 1970, Radio Prambors came to define much of the emerging pop culture in Indonesia through music and on-air programming. Prambors built up a dedicated audience by staying at the forefront of emerging trends in music, discovering local acts, and developing innovative in-house productions such as the Warkop comedy group in 1973 and the radio play *Catatan Si Boy* (*Boy's Notes*) first broadcast in 1984. *Catatan Si Boy* broadcast on Thursday nights from 10pm to midnight became an iconic voice for Indonesian youth. These forms of pop culture began to articulate their identity as young people otherwise unrepresented in the political system and the mass media such as television and cinema.

For the New Order, the youth—or *pemuda*—constituted an ambiguous segment of the population since they had been instrumental to many of the political movements leading to independence in the 1950s and to Suharto's rise in the 1960s. Feared by the state and poorly understood by producers, youth were increasingly depoliticized over the course of the New Order's regime, becoming "consuming youth" rather than "revolutionary youth." This was visible in the film version of *Catatan Si Boy* (Nasri Cheppy, 1987) starring the popular Onky Alexander in the titular role, one of only a handful of films that targeted youth audiences. In the film, Boy is presented as a model youth, fashionable, working out in the gym, driving a flashy car, but also chaste and pious. At the end of the film he flies to America, the epitome of modern consumerism, to attend university. The politically engaged youth of the 1960s had been replaced by the trendy, materialist youth of the 1980s. Although state efforts to depoliticize young people were not entirely successful, as the student-led protests of 1997–1998 made obvious, the emergence of a consuming middle class enabled much of their energies and identity expression to be channeled into pop culture.

For these middle-class youth audiences, Indonesian films were largely stuck in old paradigms from the 1970s and 1980s and could not keep up with styles and fashions that their consumption patterns and lifestyles demanded. Pop culture into the 1990s would be characterized by a splintering of taste, subcultural segmentation, and fast-moving trends. Global fashions and forms contributed to shaping youth trends as the cultural repertoire available to young Indonesian consumers

expanded dramatically due to globalization.[29] Indonesia's mediascape proliferated with the widespread availability of home video, satellite television, and privately-owned television broadcasters. The pop culture television program *MTV* began airing in Indonesia in 1995 and gave voice and recognition to Indonesia's youth. Music from the likes of Slank, Chrisye, Dewa 19, Iwa K, Sheila on 7, Padi, Potret, AB Three, Iwan Fals, Dewi Gita, and others became the focal point for youth culture, often including slang, satire, protests, and themes such as love and self-expression. Music provided Indonesia's youth a space to socialize and discuss their problems, and represented their concerns, dreams, and issues in ways that other media did not. Music videos became an important part of the youth diet alongside going to the cinema to watch Hollywood (not Indonesian) films. The film industry in the 1990s was distant from changes in youth consumption patterns, and peripheral to mainstream pop culture. One of the primary reasons that the film industry of the late 1980s and 1990s collapsed is because it failed to appeal to young people.

In these youth-orientated media industries of the 1990s, new institutions of production, marketing, and distribution were established to keep up with demand and ever-changing trends and tastes. This focus on the needs and desires of audiences had already been normalized in privately owned national broadcast television, but in music the focus was much more on the youth market. Attentive to audience tastes and trends, the music industry developed strategies to recruit cultural producers who were attuned to the emerging trends in 1990s youth culture and who could produce content relevant to them. Music recording companies developed music video production arms that were linked into television stations and the live music circuit. Infrastructure and standards were introduced to facilitate the easy transfer and consumption of cultural products such as music cassettes and fashion. These were integrated into global forms of pop culture and attentive to emerging trends and fashions. By the end of the 1990s, there was a significant and flourishing culture industry producing pop culture orientated towards the growing youth market.[30] What was missing were local feature films.

In the wake of the 1997–1998 Asian Financial Crisis (known locally as *krismon*) and the resignation of President Suharto on May 21, 1998—marking the end of the New Order regime—new opportunities appeared in the cultural economy. Bankruptcies of old business players freed space for new sources of capital and new players to enter the media industry, which during the New Order had been largely closed off to outsiders. Institutional and political reform followed by reducing the authoritarian powers of state agencies, introducing market reforms into the economy, and instituting forms of democratic accountability into the

29. Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Culture Economy," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7 (1990): 295–310.

30. Michael Bodden, "Rap in Indonesian Youth Music of the 1990s: 'Globalization,' 'Outlaw Genres,' and Social Protest," *Asian Music* 36, no. 2 (2005): 1–26. Emma Baulch, "Alternative Music and Mediation in Late New Order Indonesia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (2002): 219–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464937022000000138.

political system. Pertinent to the film industry was the abolition of the Department of Information in 1999 under President Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, and with it the end of the onerous requirements placed on film production including script approval and membership in state-sanctioned unions. Increasingly the economy would be opened to the market, giving precedence to competition, and making consumption a more determinant mechanism. These conditions would assist the post-1998 filmmakers by opening their industry to the market and providing incentive to integrate with prevailing modes of pop culture.

When film production began again after 1998 through the efforts of young, indie-minded filmmakers their concern was not to appeal to a broad national audience, but rather make films that they as young people wanted to make. Emerging from thirty-two years of domestic authoritarian rule under which creative expression was curtailed and highly regulated, *reformasi* offered a space to make forms of culture that had previously been forbidden, dangerous, underground, or risky. They made films about issues relevant to themselves as young people about first love, identity, youth struggles, self-definition, and so on. These representations of youth culture found an audience segment already primed from the 1990s and now a significant consumer segment in the Indonesian entertainment economy. As middle-class values and consumption patterns normalized across the economy, the demand for pop culture increased, primarily from a youth segment who came of age after 1998.[31] Indonesia's youth were looking for other outlets that spoke to them. They were turning away from television and came to the cinema as a place where their interests, identities, and struggles were increasingly being represented. Filmmakers who were themselves young Indonesians found a connection with a new audience by expressing a shared set of tastes and interests, desires and pleasures. This was a different set of concerns to that of the cinema during the New Order.

Whilst creativity has been largely freed from state intervention, it is now the market that drives investment, allocates resources, and determines relationships between various industry actors. This has made Indonesian cinema much more attentive to its audiences and responsive to the various trends within broader Indonesian society. At the same time, it has allowed for the institutionalization of cultural production into systematic operations and processes that can produce content of a consistent and regularized quality. Film is now a part of pop culture in Indonesia, producing content for the mainstream market and diversifying to satisfy subcultures and niche market segments. New segments have emerged reflecting a diversity of interests giving rise to new content and new debates. A lively pop culture gives rise to new trends that interact in complex and fragmented ways, of which pop Islam has been the most visible and the most contentious over the last decade.[32] As

31. Nuraini Juliastuti, "Whatever I Want: Media and Youth in Indonesia before and after 1998," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (2006): 139–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370500463786.
32. Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia Television, Identity, and the Middle Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54880-1.

the Indonesian film industry has integrated with prevailing modes of pop culture, it has often been at the forefront of new cultural movements and trends. Indonesian film is no longer peripheral, indie, or alternative culture, but now constitutes an important component of the mainstream.

How to Go Mainstream

In modern consumer societies, pop culture is omnipresent—on television, on the radio, in the cinemas, and on the streets as fashion—and we take its presence for granted. At the same time, pop culture is ephemeral and its trends and fashions transient. Histories of pop culture have been written that chronicle the ever-changing trends and fashions as singers, stars, brands, and icons rise to prominence, gain popularity, before falling out of favor and fading away. However, this is not the same as *historicizing* pop culture, which traces the contingency of broader cultural movements and cultural forms. In many places and at varying times, different forms or modes of pop culture may become unavailable or irrelevant, or the content of what is available may be dominated by product from elsewhere. In these cases, foreign domination may be seen as cultural hegemony, and has been a consistent theme in analyses of Hollywood's presence in cinemas across the world.[33] Just as salient are the local conditions of cultural production that allow producers of culture to connect with and react to the tastes and needs of their audiences, thereby bringing a form of pop culture into the mainstream.

It may seem counterintuitive for local feature films not to be a part of mainstream pop culture, but for around fifteen years in Indonesia they were not. Pop culture products and entire genres are susceptible to changing audience interests and cycles of popularity, and at times local producers may be out of step with what local audiences want.[34] This is what happened in Indonesia in the 1990s: what was being made was being watched by very few people, in cinemas at the fringes of social respectability. It was not attracting the interest of youth consumers who drive the production of pop culture. Indonesia's youth still went to the cinema, but they went to watch imported and foreign films rather than anything locally made. Producers of culture are constantly working to make their work relevant, make it accessible, and adopt familiar tropes, themes, and content. In instances where pop culture thrives, there exists mechanisms, platforms, and processes that enable and facilitate the translation of ideas and creativity into a palatable and consumable form that reaches audiences. Through these mechanisms, a cultural form can become mainstream.

Whilst seeing film as pop culture moves away from aesthetic and value judgements inherent in the distinctions of high culture or national cinema, we require

33. See for example Miller et al., *Global Hollywood*, 2004.

34. For more on cycles, see Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

ways with which to classify and demarcate different streams of cultural content and define different cultural spaces. To some extent the categories of high culture and popular culture have collapsed with the unravelling of previous forms of cultural authority, new media making previously exclusive forms of culture more accessible, and the proliferation of subcultures, but this does not mean that pop culture is homogenous and free from distinctions. Therefore, this book uses the concept of the mainstream as a new way of thinking about and discussing pop culture. Mainstream pop culture is liked and acceptable to a majority of people or to the "center." It is here that pop culture finds its primary audience and the constellation of values, ideas, and content that are acceptable to them. Mainstream culture is often discussed in derisive terms as being derivative, formulaic, and predictable but it is precisely these features and the stability and predictability of themes, genres, formats, and values that make it attractive and pleasurable to a broad audience. Mainstream culture is nevertheless constantly changing and evolving to suit new tastes, trends, fashions, and interests driven by youth consumers.

Mainstream pop culture can be defined in contrast to alternative forms of culture, typically independent, alternative, art, and the experimental. Here I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's work on "the field of cultural production,"[35] in which he draws a distinction between the field of limited production and the field of large-scale production. These distinctions are determined partly by content and format, but also by production methods, means of circulation, audiences, and consumption location. In Bourdieuian terms, mainstream pop culture corresponds to the field of large-scale production in which cultural goods are produced for a wide public of consumers for economic profit. Products are distributed through commercial channels of distribution such as prominent cinema chains and television, catering to a large an audience as possible. Independent or indie production typically occurs outside these networks and channels and often embodies alternative values—oppositional or minority politics for example—in formats and genres that are less palatable to a mainstream audience.[36] Alternative and indie culture finds avenues in less prominent venues such as underground clubs, alternative radio, independent cinemas, and so on.[37] Conversely, art and experimental media tend to be harder to understand, are less accessible, and thus outside of a mainstream cultural diet. There is constant movement, negotiation and appropriation between different cultural streams, as content creators seek popularity and greater audiences and established commercial producers adopt ideas and trends from alternative and indie content.

To "go mainstream" and to appeal to this broad middle ground, cultural producers shape their products in particular ways. This means products need to be

35. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," *Poetics* 12, no. 4–5 (November 1983): 311–56.

36. See Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 14–16. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

37. Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 203–4.

meaningful to audiences and respond to their changing tastes and needs. Audiences will seek and find what is meaningful and pleasurable for them, and this may not automatically be pop culture from their own culture or country. This was seen for example in England in the 1930s, when British working class audiences snubbed locally made films in favor of Hollywood films because the latter spoke to their aspirations more than stale British films could.[38] Locally produced pop culture might have certain advantages over imported content, for reasons of familiarity and accessibility, but it is by no means guaranteed. Once producers of pop culture have found their audience and the means to appeal to them, then that cultural product might enter the mainstream cultural diet. Stuart Hall calls this relationship between production and consumption as one of "articulation" in that cultural producers make culture that appeals to and has meaning for consumers at a particular time.[39] Ultimately, this articulation between production and consumption sustains pop culture as an industry. The exact ingredients necessary to do this will vary from society to society, but in general terms mainstream culture will need to be familiar, relevant, and accessible to its audiences. I briefly explain each of these three in turn and their importance to how pop culture becomes mainstream.

Pop culture relies on familiarity, often expressed through genre or other forms of content, to meet audience expectations. This is a central argument in genre theory as found in the work of Andrew Tudor, where genre is used to describe the process by which cultural products are constantly being renewed, but in ways that are incremental and dynamic rather than sudden or rupturing.[40] Genres are a way of conforming content and stories to recognizable patterns and drawing on familiar tropes, presented through characters and language that the audience will understand. Characters will be recognizable, as will the situations they get themselves in and the locations and language that appear. Familiarity is also expressed through the problems that characters encounter, and the dreams and values that emerge from these scenarios. This does not mean that audiences will only consume what is locally made, but even local cultural producers need to know how to translate contemporary interests and themes into a pop culture product that audiences want to consume. Different genres and programming require different skills and abilities on the part of their creators, to "articulate" to their respective audiences. In Indonesia, *sinetron* became a highly successful format in the 1990s and remains popular until today, whereas feature film only regained its popularity with audiences in the decade following 1998.

Pop culture that is also relevant to its audience by being meaningful to people's lives and struggles will have greater mainstream appeal. Recent studies of how

38. Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith, *Cinema, Literature and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).
39. See Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 45–60.
40. Andrew Tudor, *Image and Influence: Studies in the Sociology of Film* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 225–26.

Japanese and later Korean television drama have gained popularity across East Asia show that these dramas have a particular appeal to young women audiences because they describe the dilemma of romance, family and work that modern women struggle with in their day to day lives.[41] For these women, television dramas present and operationalize a social reality that is more familiar to them than dramas made in their own country or American television shows such as *Sex in the City*. The values, concerns, and struggles are more familiar and relevant to them. Mainstream content therefore needs to be able to speak to its audience, cover themes and ideas that people want to watch, and discuss the concerns that audiences have. For teenagers who are often the primary consumers of pop culture, this will include content that discusses coming of age themes such as love and relationships.

Mainstream pop culture content also needs to be accessible in terms of both form and content. Accessible content speaks to an audience in their own language, through culturally appropriate idioms, and characters, in recognizable situations. This may also include stories and scenarios that are close to people's interests and experiences and thus "of the people." Cultural products need also to be accessible for people to consume in formats and media that are readily available. Mainstream pop culture occupies the main commercial channels of distribution including broadcast television, music radio, and the cinema which are accessible and available. In Indonesia for example, affordability is important and explains why films are consumed on "pirated" DVDs rather than legitimate DVD copies because of the significant price difference. Mainstream pop culture can be characterized as much by its location and spaces of consumption as it can be by its content and format.

"Going mainstream" is therefore not a simple equation and cultural industries around the world constantly flirt with failure in creating and delivering content to audiences. Films regularly flop at the box-office, and music albums disappear into obscurity. Filmmakers are constantly vexed by the tastes and interest of audience, unable to know for sure what will succeed and what will fail. Integrating film into other forms of pop culture by adapting content and adopting music and stars, and utilizing marketing and advertising, lessen the risk of market failure. We often come to see mainstream pop culture as already operating, rather than seeing it take shape and develop as it has in Indonesia over the past ten to fifteen years, and this is what Indonesian cinema shows us: how a pop culture form can go mainstream. It is a process that is complex, fraught, and revealing not only in terms of how cultural industries operate, and the ways in which cultural production articulates with consumption, but of the broader post-authoritarian context of Indonesia in the years following the end of the New Order and its democratization in which the citizen-consumer has become increasingly sovereign.

41. Koichi Iwabuchi, "Discrepant Intimacy: Popular Culture Flows in East Asia," in *Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities*, ed. John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470774281.ch2.

Inside *Going Mainstream*

Following this introduction, *Going Mainstream* is divided into seven chapters with a short conclusion. Chapter 1 delineates Indonesian film history from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1998. In tracing the fortunes of local production under different political regimes—colonialism, Japanese occupation, independence and guided democracy, and the New Order—it shows how film has been imagined, discussed, and operationalized by various actors, including intellectuals, the public, state officials, and filmmakers themselves. Behind the names and production numbers of film history, there is a cultural politics that has shaped the discourse of what Indonesian film is and what it should be. Indonesian film history is read as an ongoing conflict between a commercial, popular imperative and a national cinema ideal.

Chapter 2 looks at the impact of a new generation of young filmmakers such as Rizal Mantovani, Riri Riza, Mira Lesmana, Upi Avianto, and Monty Tiwa, who experimented with new technologies and modes of production. Beginning film production as largely an indie endeavor, over the decade they realigned feature film towards mainstream pop culture. Firstly, they provoked the largest movie theater chain in Indonesia, the Cinema 21 Group, to play local films again, allowing local audiences direct access to their films. This enabled other young filmmakers to gain exposure, seek audiences, while earning valuable experience in feature-length filmmaking. Secondly, young filmmakers developed new storytelling and visual techniques to make films that local audiences could enjoy, restoring film as a consumption option. Thirdly, young filmmakers forged ties with older producers to secure a consistent supply of production capital, allowing them to produce films on a more consistent basis. In going from indie to industry, Indonesia shows how a cultural form such as cinema can re-enter mainstream pop culture.

Chapters 3 and 4 reveal the ways in which young filmmakers such as Hanung Bramantyo, Rizal Mantovani, Kuntz Agus, and Nayato Fio Nuala have reconnected with young audiences in Indonesia by reinventing two genres: horror films and Islamic-themed films. Both have been criticized for being commercially oriented, but these are important genres that appeal to mainstream tastes. Horror has been a staple of Indonesian film culture since the 1970s, and the return of the genre after 2000 showed how young filmmakers were able to revitalize it by translating the unconscious fears and anxieties of Indonesia's youth into traditional ghostly forms. Islamic themed films rose in prominence in 2008 and tapped into a growing Islamic market in post–New Order Indonesia. Often mixing Islam and love themes, this new genre speaks to young Indonesians whose fantasies are tied to modern romance and religious piety. Yet this provoked debate and controversy around the commodification of Islam, representations of polygamy, and the role and place of Islam in everyday life.

Chapter 5 considers the exhibition sector, its role as point of consumption for feature films, and the dominance of the Cinema 21 Group. Tracing the emergence of cinema technologies and the shifts in the exhibition sector through the financial crisis, it examines how the exhibition paradigm contributes to the current landscape of film consumption which in turn shapes how producers and filmmakers find audiences and make money. Despite attempts to challenge the market dominance of the Cinema 21 Group through protest and litigation, it has instead been big capital who have capitalized on the under-serviced cinema market, introducing a logic of large-scale capital investment whilst challenging the dominant position of the Cinema 21 Group. This opened the exhibition sector to new forms of competition marking the sector's further integration into the market system and global capitalism.

Chapter 6 returns to the political economy of the film industry, pointing out how the film industry is structured around an oligopoly of producers. These producers were nurtured during the New Order expanding into the television sector where they professionalized their production businesses to the point that they have emerged as large-scale enterprises in the post-1998 market era. Although subject to negative characterization due to their ethnicity, these producers are the product of the New Order political economy which benefited from their politically weak position as ethnic minorities. Despite the changes ushered in by *reformasi*, these large producers have been able to capitalize on the open market conditions, returning to film production by taken advantage of their structural advantage, allowing them to maintain a position as an oligopoly in an industry otherwise subject to market forces.

Chapter 7 discusses the ongoing conflicts filmmakers have had with a state that is still adapting to a post-authoritarian era. The persistence of draconian laws and regulations, and the continuation of state apathy and corruption in the creative sector continue to frustrate filmmakers. Lawmakers continue to be embedded in an old paradigm reminiscent of the New Order, and struggle to adapt to the new realities of a market driven pop culture even if the term "creative industries" has become a new policy buzzword for the government as it tries to capitalize on the creative potential of Indonesia's citizens. Attempts by filmmakers to bring reform to the film sector have more often than not failed, bringing into question the state's commitment to reform and the ability of the film industry to provide the structural support for the next generation of filmmakers.

Finally, the Conclusion looks at the new realities of the Indonesian film industry determined as it is by the market rather than the state. It reconsiders the three salient frames of reference being used: *film nasional* (national cinema), pop culture, and more recently creative industries. This book offers a new approach to studying cinema in the context of Indonesian post-authoritarianism by understanding that cinema is subject to a variety of often contradictory forces and influences. For studies of pop culture, it shows how the concept of the mainstream provides a means to capture and analyze cultural industries through times of political and

economic upheaval. By detailing the important process of institutionalization whereby forms of production and consumption are routinized and regularized, a pop culture industry can be sustained that is able to respond creatively to emerging trends and demands within the market and contribute to ongoing debates about Indonesia today. It recognizes the growing power of the market in Indonesia and the ways in which pop culture is increasingly integrated with all aspects of daily life.

1

Indonesian Cinema before *Reformasi*

For much of Indonesia's modern history, its cinema has not been seen and studied as a form of pop culture, but rather as national cinema. Studies of Indonesian cinema to date have been therefore consistent with the primary methodological approach of film studies, as defined by Ian Jarvie, which is to take the "the nation-state as its primary organizing category."[1] While the nation remains a useful category, Ulrich Beck has cautioned against what he defines as "methodological nationalism," which defines film history solely through national policies, a national audience, and the consideration of filmmakers as agents of national culture.[2] Indeed, recent works in film studies have challenged the coherence of the nation categorization by asserting ways in which the nation is challenged by complexity within or from transnational linkages in film production and circulation.[3] For example, Andrew Moor's study on émigrés in British cinema of the 1930s and 1940s leads him to define a "cosmopolitan cinema" composed of sites of "ceaseless crosscurrents of cultural exchange."[4] Similarly, debates over the last decade in Chinese cinema studies have defined Chinese film as inherently transnational due to the multitude of interactions, exchanges, and circulations occurring across national borders.[5]

Although the nation is increasingly called into question, as Andrew Higson suggests, cinema remains an important "means of narrating nations."[6] Such imaginings play a part in creating the nation as a community with a shared history, identity, and destiny. This is useful in nationalist projects of nation building, but is often incongruous with the actual reality of filmmaking and the circulation of

1. Ian Jarvie, "National Cinema: A Theoretical Assessment," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 70.
2. Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Condition: Why Methodological Nationalism Fails," *Theory Culture Society* 24, no. 7–8 (2007): 286–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407024007250 5.
3. Hong Guo-Juin, *Taiwan Cinema: A Contested Nation on Screen* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Campos, *End of National Cinema*, 11–12.
4. Andrew Moor, "Émigrés in Classic British Cinema," in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History*, ed. Ian Hunter, Laraine Porter, and Justin Smith (London: Routledge, 2017), 159.
5. Chris Berry and Laikwan Pang, "Introduction, or, What's in an 'S'?," *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 2, no. 1 (2008): 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1386/jcc.2.1.3/2. Marchetti and Tan, *Hong Kong Film*.
6. Andrew Higson, *Film England: Culturally English Filmmaking Since the 1990s* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 1.

its products as Brian Larkin has documented in the case of Nigeria.[7] The tension therefore is between a reification of the nation as a coherent and definable entity and approaches that see the nation as a construct, or what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community," in constant negotiation with its identity and definition.[8] I argue that the idea of a national cinema can be further challenged by studying film as a form of pop culture in the case of Indonesia especially, and therefore linked to other media both domestic and global, rather than cinema as a distinct and unique object of study. In many ways we cannot escape the nation when discussing cinema—particularly Indonesia which is still largely a domestic focused film industry—but often the nation is not just a geographical or administrative boundary but an ideological construct.

Most narratives of Indonesian film history to date have asserted the primacy and coherence of the nation in normative and prescriptive terms. Cinema is taken as a reflection and expression of a particular national history, an identity and attendant culture, and associated with nationalist ambitions. As a result, certain filmmakers are elevated, certain films are venerated, and certain moments are celebrated, often at the expense of films and filmmakers who do not subscribe to the official history of the nation or to prevailing nationalist ideas.[9] In Indonesia, the particular iteration of national cinema is referred to as *film nasional*, and is the organizing concept around which much of the scholarship and policy is written, through which its problems are diagnosed, and through which its performance is assessed.

Modern Indonesia is characterized by a nationalist project that came into being following independence in 1950 of which *film nasional* is an important component encompassing both cultural and economic aspirations. Film editor and luminary Soemardjono, speaking at a forum thirty years after Indonesian independence in 1979, defined *film nasional* in the following way:

1. Film Nasional must be a product of the culture of the Indonesian People.
2. Film Nasional must replace the domination of foreign films, just as the Indonesian People were victorious in destroying colonial domination.
3. Film Nasional must serve the People and Nation of Indonesia in developing the Indonesian CHARACTER and NATION BUILDING.[10]

7. Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
8. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
9. Zhang, *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality*, 17–19.
10. Original text reads: "1. Film Nasional harus merupakan produk kebudayaan Bangsa Indonesia.2. Film Nasional harus dapat menggantikan dominasi film asing, seperti halnya Bangsa Indonesia berhasil merobohkan dominasi kolonialisme. 3. Film Nasional harus mampu mengabdi kepada Bangsa dan Negara Indonesia dalam pembangunan WATAK dan KEBANGSAAN INDONESIA (Character and Nation building)." Soemardjono, *Perfilman Indonesia Masa Kini dan Nanti*. Lokakarya Perfilman Nasional, Jakarta, March 3–4, 1979.

According to Soemardjono, *film nasional* is a prescriptive ideological imperative that defines who should be making films, what they should contain and promote, and what should be in the nation's cinemas. Replacing the "domination of foreign films" is encapsulated in the oft-repeated motto of "*tuan di rumah sendiri*" ("master in his own house") in which it is hoped that Indonesian-made films will dominate local cinemas and screen to large audiences. In Indonesia, the cinema screen—more than any other cultural industry or form—has been subject to debate, policy, and control in the hope that a truly "Indonesian cinema" or *film nasional* can be created and sustained.

Since the 1960s, the values and ambitions of *film nasional* have been personalized in the figure of writer-director Usmar Ismail, considered both progenitor and prototype. According to the prominent film historians Salim Said and Misbach Yusa Biran, Usmar Ismail made the first "Indonesian" film called *Darah dan Doa* (*The Long March*, 1950).[11] Its release was felt to inaugurate a new mode of filmmaking that coincided with the national political and cultural awakening ushered in by independence. *Darah dan Doa* narrates the march of the military's Siliwangi Division as they return from battle in East Java before being dispatched to quell another rebellion. Captain Sudarto (Del Juzar), the main protagonist, is tired of war and although married seeks escape in the company of two women on his journey. In the penultimate scene, Sudarto is murdered by a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) who were at the time involved in an uprising, and the film concludes with images of soldiers marching forward accompanied by a voice-over praising the military and their role in the struggle for independence. Written by Sitor Situmorang and directed by Ismail, it was the first film released by Ismail's Perfini production company.

Ismail was born in Bukittinggi, Sumatra, in 1921 and moved to Batavia (Jakarta) in the 1930s where he earned a reputation as a promising playwright. In 1942, he was employed by the Japanese propaganda unit the Sendenbu to write for the theatre and produce other propaganda materials. Before *Darah dan Doa* he directed two films for the Dutch SPFC company after 1945,[12] but later downplayed them as films he made under instruction.[13] *Darah dan Doa*, which he therefore claimed as his first film, "was made entirely without any commercial considerations whatsoever, and was motivated entirely by idealism."[14] His filmmaking career over the 1950s and 1960s was reflective of the times, beginning with optimism and idealism in the 1950s, but turning toward more commercial films to secure income later that decade. In 1954, Ismail was instrumental in establishing the Indonesian Film Producers Association (PPFI, Persatuan Produser Film Indonesia), leading

11. Misbach Yusa Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950: Bikin Film di Jawa* (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2009); Salim Said, *Shadows on the Silver Screen: A Social History of Indonesian Film* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation, 1991).
12. Usmar Ismail directed *Tjitra* (*Image*, 1949) and *Harta Karun* (*Treasure*, 1949).
13. Usmar Ismail, *Usmar Ismail Mengupas Film* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1983), 57.
14. Usmar Ismail, *Usmar Ismail Mengupas Film*, 58.

the National Film Conference (BMPN, Badan Musyawarah Perfilman Nasional) in 1959, and developing film policy through such programs as the Preservation Strategy for National Cinema (Pola Pembinaan Perfilman Nasional) in 1967. In total, he directed twenty-three films before his death in 1971 at the age of fifty. He represented Indonesia internationally, especially as a prominent member of the Cold War era anti-communist Asian Motion Picture Producers Association (AMPPA) headquartered in Hong Kong.[15]

Over time, and through countless retellings, *Darah dan Doa* and Ismail have been immortalized in Indonesian film history. For Said and Biran, films made before *Darah dan Doa* simply do not qualify as Indonesian films, not because the nation only officially gained independence in December 1949, but because Ismail is said to embody the three characteristics of indigeneity, idealism, and artistry that make him the legitimate originator of Indonesian cinema. For them, the true Indonesian filmmaker is an artist who works in the name of idealism rather than for commercial gain. He should be indigenous (*pribumi*) since Indonesian national history is read as the struggle of *pribumi* against the dominance of foreigners, emerging from under colonial rule against both neocolonialism and the economically powerful ethnic minority Chinese and Indians after independence. As a result, true Indonesian films should therefore promote nationalism and national culture and should be edifying, not just entertainment. *Darah dan Doa* is exemplary because it dramatizes the struggle for independence from the perspective of the military.

At a meeting of the Indonesian Film Council (Dewan Film Indonesia) in 1962, National Film Day was declared as the day *Darah dan Doa* went into production, March 30. Ismail's status as the "father of Indonesian cinema" (*Bapak Perfilman Nasional*) was formalized in 1999 by presidential decree (Keppres no. 25/1999) under President Habibie. Alongside Ismail, the producer and head of the Persari production company, Djamaluddin Malik, is often named as the forefather of the Indonesian film industry. In film histories and articles discussing the state and legacy of Indonesian cinema, Ismail is consistently named as the model filmmaker for others to emulate.[16] The emphasis on Ismail as an ideal type also shows how an ideologically informed historiography of film history in Indonesia has been produced. Every year on March 30, eulogies to his legacy are published, reminding and challenging others to follow in his footsteps.[17] As a result, Ismail stands as the embodiment of *film nasional*, which conceals rather than reveals the much longer

15. Kinnia Shuk-ting Yau, "Interactions Between Japanese and Hong Kong Action Cinemas," in *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*, ed. Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li, and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 36.
16. H Misbach Yusa Biran, "Merenungkan Kembali Visi dan Langkah Besar Para Pelopor Perfilman dalam Mendorong Awal Perkembangan Industri Film Indonesia," Penyegaran Tekad dan Semangat Joeng Insan Perfilman Dalam Memasuki Repelita V, Jakarta, August 11, 1988.
17. For example, Chairil, "Looking at Both Sides."

and richer history of film production in Indonesia as popular entertainment, and the cultural debates that have accompanied it.[18]

Different Beginnings

Darah dan Doa may have been the first film produced in independent Indonesia by a native (*pribumi*) but it was not the first feature length fiction film made in the archipelago. That honor went to two Europeans who made *Loetoeng Kasaroeng* in 1926 with the assistance of the Bupati (regent) of Bandung whose daughter (Martoana) also acted in the film. Documentary films had been made even earlier, including those promoting the Dutch East Indies and its industries for consumption in the colony and around the world.[19] Even though feature film production began comparatively late in the Dutch East Indies, cinema as a popular entertainment was adopted early and with fervor. The first recorded screening occurred in 1900 and cinemas began to be built in the major cities, which were becoming more cosmopolitan and culturally vibrant in the early 1900s due to increased trade, urban migration, new consumer goods, media such as newspapers, and new spaces of social interaction. Local ethnic Chinese who were an important part of the colonial economy took a particular interest in cinema as they had in other forms of modern entertainment, and by the 1920s films were being imported from Shanghai alongside those from Europe and the United States. By 1936 there were 227 cinemas in the Dutch East Indies, owned either by Europeans or ethnic Chinese.[20]

Film exhibition, whether in fixed cinemas or on mobile screens, represented a continuation of the musical and theatrical entertainment traditions that had become popular in the region since the late 1890s. Peripatetic groups toured cities and towns not only in Java and Sumatra, but also the Philippines, British Malaya (including Singapore), and beyond.[21] When film production took off in Indonesia following *Loetoeng Kasaroeng*, ethnic Chinese businessmen drove investment in production and drew on acting talent from these theatre groups. Early pioneers of film production included the Wong Brothers, Tan Koen Yauw, and The Teng Chun. Throughout the 1930s, locally made films increased in number and popularity, with hits such as the Indonesia-Singapore co-production *Terang Boelan* (*Full Moon*, Albert Balink, 1937), and the first use of the word "Indonesia" in a title in *Indonesia Malaise* (Wong Brothers, 1931). Filmmaking followed a commercial modus operandi and imagined an Indonesia that was cosmopolitan and multiethnic.[22] It however provided only

18. Barker, "Historical Inheritance."
19. Sandeep Ray, "Celluloid Colony: Occluded Histories of the Netherlands East Indies from Moving Images" (PhD diss., National University of Singapore, 2015). http://scholarbank.nus.edu.sg/handle/10635/121959.
20. HM Johan Tjasmadi, *100 Tahun Sejarah Bioskop di Indonesia (1900–2000)* (Bandung: Megindo Tunggal Sejahtera, 2008).
21. Matthew Cohen, *The Komedie Stamboel: Popular Theatre in Colonial Indonesia, 1891–1903* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).
22. Charlotte Setijadi-Dunn and Thomas Barker, "Imagining 'Indonesia': Ethnic Chinese Film Producers in

limited opportunities for native Indonesians beyond acting and behind-the-scenes crew-work, although this was beginning to change towards the beginning of the 1940s.

When the Japanese invaded the Dutch East Indies in 1942, film production was brought under the control of their propaganda unit the Sendenbu and the Nippon Eigasha film unit.[23] Independent and commercial feature film production stopped and film along with other modern means of communication became tools for Japanese propaganda. Because it was Japanese policy to produce material in Bahasa Indonesia, the Sendenbu employed many native Indonesians to write and produce content, bringing in artists and cultural workers who had been peripheral to the ethnic Chinese dominated industry of the 1930s. Ismail, Sansui Pané, Andjar Asmara (a.k.a. Abisin Abbas), and others received their first instruction in filmmaking under the Japanese with a very different working style to the Chinese commercial producers of the 1930s. For them, the Japanese occupation is remembered positively in that the Japanese took seriously the need to appeal to and mobilize the wider native population. The Japanese also provided training in modern media production and insight into the power of modern media as a tool for indoctrination and education. These functions would become a cornerstone of how *film nasional* would be imagined after independence.[24]

Nationalist leader Soekarno declared Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, in the wake of the Japanese surrender, but it would be another four years until independence was achieved. The Dutch returned to reclaim their former colony but faced an independence movement committed to its struggle (*perjuangan*). With the Dutch in control of Batavia (Jakarta), many Indonesians moved to the revolutionary capital in Yogyakarta where a vibrant theatre scene developed, including companies run by Djamaluddin Malik and a former Japanese propaganda officer Dr Huyung whose Kino Drama Atelier group taught theatre production and filmmaking.[25] After independence, Dr Huyung made four feature films including *Frieda* (1950) about a Eurasian who switches sides to join the revolution and *Gadis Olahraga* (*Sportswoman*, 1952) about a village girl training to compete as a runner in the Southeast Asian Games in Jakarta.[26] Huyung was an ethnic Korean who found a home in the Indonesian struggle for independence. During this interregnum period, cultural production was used as a means of expressing and dramatizing themes of independence and defining the new identity and spirit of the Indonesian people. Poets, playwrights, and artists who expressed these themes became celebrated representatives of the new nation, especially those connected to the *Angkatan '45* ('45

Pre-Independence Cinema," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.25_1.

23. Aiko Kurasawa, "Propaganda Media on Java under the Japanese 1942–1945," *Indonesia* 44 (1987): 59–107.
24. Ismail, *Usmar Ismail Mengupas Film*; Biran, *Sejarah Film 1900–1950*.
25. Thomas Barker, "Colonial Mobility and Ambiguity: The Life of Filmmaker Hinatsu/Huyung," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 5, no. 2 (July 2017): 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2017.3.
26. Frieda was originally titled *Antara Bumi dan Langit* (Between the Earth and the Sky).

Generation) such as Asrul Sani, playwright Utuy Tatang Sontani, writer Achdiat K. Mihardja, and in particular poet Chairil Anwar.

Alongside Ismail and other emergent native filmmakers, many ethnic Chinese returned to make feature films after independence but were perceived to have returned to their commercial, moneymaking ways rather than making films promoting nationalism or national culture. This distrust of the ethnic Chinese and their association with business was widespread and indicative of the prevailing ethno-nationalism at the time.[27] Ethno-nationalists like Asrul Sani felt that the creation of a national cinema that was concomitant with national independence was being held back by ethnic Chinese filmmakers:

> The film producers in Indonesia are nothing other than those who think about their wallets and do not consider or intend to establish anything that is worthy of being valued highly, it should not be doubted anymore. It can be said: all of them are Chinese.[28]

In part, this was spurious since even Ismail's *Darah dan Doa* was only finished because of funding provided by an ethnic Chinese cinema owner,[29] and many ethnic Chinese made or sponsored nationalist films. However, it entrenched the belief that there were two distinct types of cinema: the commercial-popular and the idealist-nationalist, and that the ethnic Chinese belonged exclusively in the first category. Nationalists believed that films should be approached as an art form made in the name of idealism rather than commercialism. In many ways this reflected differing political outlooks between an inward-looking nationalism, and efforts towards cosmopolitanism and cultural openness.[30]

Rather than being celebrated, the popularity of commercially orientated production from ethnic Chinese producers was seen as part of a broader foreign domination and suppression of Indonesian national cinema. In the 1950s, imported films from Malaya, India, the Philippines, and the United States were an entertainment staple and were often technically superior or more entertaining than locally made films.[31] Indonesian films struggled at the box-office especially in the prestigious class A cinemas in the capital, Jakarta. In 1954, it was estimated that American imports made up 90 percent of the films screened in cinemas.[32] Indonesia's technical inferiority was encapsulated in the production of Indonesia's first color film, *Rodrigo de Villa* (Rempo Urip and Gregorio Fernandez, 1952) from producer Djamaluddin

27. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *The Chinese in Indonesia* (Singapore: Select Publishing, 2007).
28. "Bahwa produser-produser film di Indonesia adalah semata-mata mereka yang hanya memikirkan kantong dan tidak menimbang atau bermaksud untuk mendirikan sesuatu yang patut diberi harga tinggi, tidak usah disangsikan lagi. Boleh dikatakan: semua mereka adalah orang Tionghoa." Asrul Sani, *Surat-Surat Kepercayaan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1997), 302.
29. Said, *Shadows*, 51.
30. Jennifer Lindsay, "Heirs to World Culture 1950–1965: An Introduction," in *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian, 1950–1965*, ed. Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H. T. Liem (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 1–28.
31. Bachtiar Effendi, "Filem Indonesia Dalam Bahaya," *Aneka* 26, November 10, 1952.
32. C. E. Siegertz quoted in *Dunia Film*, no. 23, July 15, 1954.

Malik, which had to be shot and produced in the Philippines. The technology to locally process color film only became available in 1968. Indonesian cinema was seen as engaged in a struggle against forms of foreign domination whether on screen, in production, or in exhibition, limiting cinema's ability to realize its perceived nationalist potential.

Despite the aforementioned pressures, the 1950s are seen as a "golden age" for Indonesian cinema, as newfound independence, nation building, and the possibilities of the modern era bred a mood of euphoria. Young artists and playwrights found space to produce cultural content, free from colonial controls, and in line with their nationalist ambitions. Sani, as with many others at the time, believed that the "artist" was able to translate this new spirit into cultural productions. In 1957 he wrote:

> the artist is the 'conscience of a people and an era.' And he cannot carry out his obligations as that 'conscience' or '*geweten*' if he is only allowed to follow the official truth, that has been taught in the schools, or from the department of education or even religion.[33]

Production increased year after year, and the industry welcomed a range of filmmakers, including figures such as Djajakusuma, Asrul Sani, Wim Umboh, and Lilik Sudjio. In 1955, Djamaluddin Malik funded the first Indonesian Film Festival (FFI, Festival Film Indonesia) to support and award local filmmakers, with his film *Tarmina* (Lilik Sudjio, 1954) sharing the top prize with Ismail's *Lewat Djam Malam* (*Past Curfew*, 1954). Malik himself rose to prominence as a commercial producer establishing his Persari company in 1951. He was known as the "big boss" in industry circles for his ostentatious lifestyle, his effort to build a "star system," and Persari's vast studio complex in Polonia, South Jakarta. Despite being commercial in orientation, Malik is remembered as the father of the "national film industry," rather differently to ethnic Chinese producers.

Indonesia was also subject to Cold War politics as a newly independent nation in Asia, when geopolitical competition increased between the US-led "free world" and the Communist bloc countries (USSR and China). Indonesia took a leading role amongst non-aligned nations by hosting the first Asia-Africa conference in Bandung in 1955 in which film and other forms of culture were discussed as important to developing national independence and strengthening connections between non-aligned nations (it later hosted the third iteration in April 1964). Cold War geopolitics played out in the field of culture with a number of Indonesian filmmakers receiving scholarships overseas, including Ami Prijono and Sjuman Djaya who went to the USSR, and Ismail, Sani, and Djajakusuma who went to the United States.

33. Original reads: "seniman adalah 'hati sanubari suatu masyarakat dan zaman.' Dan ia tidak akan dapat melakukan kewajibannya sebagai 'hati sanubari' atau 'geweten' itu jika ia hanya diperbolehkan makai kebenar-benaran yang resmi, yang telah diakui di bangku-bangku sekolah, atau kementerian pendidikan ataupun agama." Sani, *Surat-Surat Kepercayaan*, 321.

Indonesian films were entered into film festivals around the world including Sofia WD's *Badai Selatan* (*South Storm*, 1962) at the 12th Berlinale in 1962 and Ismail's *Pedjuang* (*Struggle*, 1960) at the Moscow International Film Festival. Indonesian filmmakers participated in regional festivals and forums such as the Southeast Asian Film Festival which began in 1954, later renamed the Asian Film Festival, an initiative of AMPPA (Asian Motion Picture Producers Association).[34] In part, the association was set up as a cultural bastion against influence from Communist countries in the region.

As President Soekarno's leadership shifted towards dictatorship under his Guided Democracy in the late 1950s, the national economy entered a phase of instability and decline. Soekarno implemented poor economic policy and a power struggle intensified between the President, the army, the PKI, Islamic groups, and others. Soekarno's attempt to unite the various factions of nationalism, religion (Islam), and communism under an ideology called NASAKOM largely failed. Annual film production peaked in 1957 and dropped off, and it would only recover to similar levels again in the 1970s. Producers associated with the PPFI went on strike in 1957, demanding greater attention and protection from the Indonesian government by reducing imports and limiting their screen-time in the second-class cinemas where most Indonesian films found their audience. Audience numbers for local films declined, forcing filmmakers out of business, and escalating tensions in the film industry. Ismail for example began making commercial films to make money, and even moved to Malaysia to make two films—*Korban Fitnah* (*Victim of Defamation*, 1959) and *Bayangan di Waktu Fajar* (*Shadow at Dawn*, 1963)—due to a string of commercial failures and deteriorating conditions in Indonesia. Djamaluddin exited the film industry in 1957, returning to trade and other commercial activities to make a living, before returning to film production again in 1961. The once vibrant and optimistic industry was replaced by uncertainty, conflict and pessimism as the nationalist consensus fractured and politics came to dominate discourse.

Increasingly, ideological differences between those on the left and right would define debates around culture and film into the 1960s. Although there was in many ways a nationalist consensus amongst artists and between political factions, the means by which national culture could be made and expressed differed. Leftists were represented by the PKI-linked LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, People's Cultural Institute), and advocated art for the people, social realism, and art as a vehicle for political ideology.[35] Prominent leftists in the film industry included Bachtiar Siagian and Basuki Effendi.[36] Labor unions representing film workers

34. Yau, "Interactions," 36. See also Charles Leary, "The Most Careful Arrangements for a Careful Fiction: A Short History of Asia Pictures," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (2012): 548–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2012.717601.

35. Keith Foulcher, *Social Commitment in Literature and the Arts: The Indonesian "Institute of People's Culture" 1950–1965* (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1986).

36. Krishna Sen, "Hidden from History: Aspects of Indonesian Cinema 1955–65," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 19, no. 2 (1985): 1–55.

became stronger, demanding greater protections for workers and increased government regulation and intervention. In reaction to the growing power of leftists, figures including HB Jassin, Goenawan Mohammad, and Taufiq Ismail released the *Manikebu* (Cultural Manifesto) in 1963, advocating universal humanism, and art for art's sake. Ismail, Sani, and Malik belonged to the right and were members of LESBUMI (Lembaga Seniman Budayawan Muslimin, Indonesian Muslim Cultural Workers Institute), linked to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a large Islamic organization. These differences reflected growing fractures in the Indonesian polity, divisions over the geopolitical alignment of Indonesia, and the direction of domestic policy.[37]

During this period, Soekarno turned hostile to Western pop culture calling it anti-revolutionary and neo-imperialist, a position increasingly adopted by the PKI. He famously railed against The Beatles and what he called "*ngak-ngik-ngok*" music, seeing it as colonizing the minds of Indonesian youth as much as foreign capital colonized the Indonesian economy. Also, famously, in 1965, the popular Indonesian rock group Koes Brothers were jailed for playing Beatles cover songs. In this environment, members of LEKRA formed Panitia Pengganyangan Film Imperialis Amerika Serikat (PAPFIAS, Action Committee Against American Imperialist Films) in the wake of the 1964 Asia-Africa Film Festival held that year in Jakarta. PAPFIAS wanted American film imports banned because they were detrimental to the revolutionary needs of the Indonesian population and prevented the development of quality Indonesian culture by dominating cinemas. Further, it was alleged that William Palmer—the head of AMPAI (American Motion Picture Association of Indonesia) office in Indonesia—was a CIA agent. PAPFIAS were supported by a range of organizations and political parties in their efforts. Cinema was increasingly dragged into political debates, and an already fragile film industry collapsed.

Rise of the New Order

Although the precise details of the "coup" in September–October 1965 may never be known, the outcome was unambiguous: General Suharto would replace Soekarno as president and preside over the authoritarian New Order regime which would last for thirty-two years until May 1998. Integral to Suharto's rise and the legitimacy of the New Order was to blame the coup on the Indonesian Communist Party. On the night of September 30, 1965, six generals were kidnapped and murdered, and the next morning the self-proclaimed "September 30 Movement" (G30S) took control of the presidential palace and Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), announcing that they had prevented a coup against President Soekarno. General Suharto, then commander of the Jakarta based Kostrad (Army Strategic Command), mobilized his soldiers and subdued the G30S. Following months of uncertainty, on March 11, 1966, Soekarno signed the Supersemar letter which gave Suharto presidential

37. Lindsay, "Heirs to World Culture."

authority to restore security and calm "using whatever means necessary." By insisting that G30S was itself a coup attempt masterminded by the PKI, a nationwide purge of PKI members and its affiliates in an act of mass violence was legitimized. Artists, writers, intellectuals, and filmmakers associated with the PKI or LEKRA were imprisoned, disappeared, or fled overseas and much of their work was destroyed. Suharto officially became president in 1968. Suharto's regime aligned Indonesia towards the United States, normalizing economic relations with the West and welcoming foreign investment, primarily from the United States and Japan to embark on a program of industrialization and development.

Integral to the New Order's legitimacy was the restoration of social and economic order and the elimination of what it perceived as communism. This resulted in a systematic rewriting of history to raise the importance and relevance of the armed forces in Indonesian history as the preeminent nationalist institution, especially in the fight for independence, and conversely the stigmatization of leftist movements and the PKI as enemies of the revolution and the unitary nation. A number of military-sponsored films made in the late 1960s sought to either venerate the armed forces such as *Piso Komando* (*A Commando's Knife*, Awaludin, 1967) or demonize the communists such as *Operasi X* (*Operation X*, Misbach Yusa Biran, 1968). In the field of culture, this meant the delegitimization of leftist filmmakers, the destruction of their films and writing, and the characterization of the period of ideological conflict in the 1960s as a dark period for the film industry. It was argued that film had been politicized, leading to conflict and polarization, and contributing directly to the decline in the industry's economic viability. In effect, whole sections of the arts and creative community who had seen culture as a vehicle for politics and social transformation were erased from creative life. This impacted how film could be used and discussed during the New Order, especially by limiting the kinds of politics that films and filmmakers could engage in.

In the late 1960s as part of its efforts to kick start the film industry and normalize cultural life, the state liberalized policies removing import quotas and loosening content restrictions. Many of these films came from America, Italy, and Japan, and were imported by Sindhi businessmen who moved into the film industry in this period utilizing their transnational trade and finance networks. Mainstream popular culture represented little threat to the new regime and the Directorate for Film adopted a quantity rather than quality approach, cultivating "the cinema as industry handled by private enterprises under government control."[38] In a government funding program not since repeated, five films were funded by the National Film Production Commission (Dewan Produksi Film Nasional, DPFN) including *Apa jang Kau Tjari, Palupi?* (*What Are You Looking for Palupi?*, Asrul Sani, 1969), *Djampang Mentjari Naga Hitam* (*Djampang in Search of the Black Dragon*, Lilik Sudjio, 1968), *Matt Dower* (Nya Abbas Akup, 1969), *Nji Ronggeng* (*The Dancer*,

38. Goenawan Mohamad, "An Introduction to the Contemporary Indonesian Cinema," *Prisma* 1, no. 1 (1975): 78.

Alam Surawidjaja, 1969), and *Kutukan Dewata* (*Curse of the Gods*, Nawi Ismail, 1970). Cinemas reopened, audiences returned, and film production increased exponentially reaching eighty films a year by 1973, most of it popular and commercial in orientation.

A number of policy and regulatory changes were introduced in the 1970s to support and develop the local film industry. Import quotas were introduced in 1971 and an import substitution program from 1975 to 1978 initially at 5:1 then later 3:1 was used to make importing conditional on the funding of local productions. Four import consortiums based on geographical origins were established to apportion import licenses and quotas and to facilitate funding. This saw a number of importers become film producers but also a persistent criticism that the resultant films were cheaply made to satisfy the regulations and not for the betterment of quality. In 1975 the Surat Keputusan Bersama 3 Menteri (SKB 3 Menteri)—a regulation involving the three ministries of Information, Education, and Trade—mandated that each cinema had to play a minimum of two Indonesian films a month for a minimum of two days. Local films would be distributed by PT Perfin, who would also enforce the screen time regulation. Ali Sadikin, the Governor of Jakarta from 1966 to 1977, established the Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) arts center in 1968, and within it the film school IKJ (Institut Kesenian Jakarta, Jakarta Arts Institute) in 1976, both of which would become important cultural institutions under the New Order. The government-sponsored Indonesian Film Festival restarted in 1973 and was held every year until 1992, following the Oscars model by awarding Citra awards for outstanding films and individuals.

This so-called quantity approach irked nationalist critics who saw sex, violence, and foreign culture being promoted at the expense of quality and national culture. In particular, Sumardjo's argument that Indonesian films were unrealistic and did not show the "true face" (*wajah sebenarnya*) of Indonesia to audiences became a rallying point for critics against the commercial industry.[39] Locally made films were often set in materially wealthy households or simply copied ideas from foreign films, and thus they did not reflect the social and material reality of most Indonesian audiences. Cultural debates came to a head in 1977 when members of the FFI jury declined to award a Citra for the Best Film that year and instead issued a statement condemning the poor-quality films being made.[40] Part of their statement read:

> Our filmmakers in general do not have an awareness of environment, geography or society, such that they have never made a film about their Indonesian environment, and because of that their films are not Indonesian films. Their films are only superficial fictions based on their dreams and obsessions supported by their excessive enthusiasm for business.[41]

39. Quoted in Salim Said, *Pantulan Layar Putih: Film Indonesia Dalam Kritik Dan Kommentar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1991), 4.
40. Said, *Shadows*, 193.
41. "Pembuatan film kita pada umumnya tidak mempunyai kesadaran lingkungan, geografis, maupun sosial,

This recalled a debate that had begun in the 1950s that decried the use of film as a commercial enterprise rather than as educational media to promote nationalism. Influential New Order film scholars writing at the time such as Misbach Yusa Biran and Salim Said drew heavily on the work of Ismail and anti-communist thinkers from the 1950s and 1960s to argue that Indonesian film in the 1970s had diverted from its true path of *film nasional* and instead become dominated by cheap commercialism backed by ethnic Chinese and Indian producers.

Yet critics ignored the fact that many popular films were engaging in social commentary and that many of the idealist directors of the era were funded and supported by the same commercial producers they denigrated.[42] Directors held up as idealists during the New Order period and who repeatedly won the Citra for Best Film at the annual FFI, such as Teguh Karya, Wim Umboh, Sjuman Djaya, and Djajakusuma were funded by commercial producers such as Raam Punjabi, Turino Djunaidy, and Hatoek Subroto. Indian-born producer and distributor Manu Sukmajaya, for example, produced *Si Doel Anak Modern* (*Doel the Modern Kid*, Sjuman Djaya, 1976), *Dibalik Kelambu* (*Behind the Mosquito Net*, Teguh Karya, 1982), *Secangkir Kopi Pahit* (*Bitter Coffee*, Teguh Karya, 1984), and *Taksi* (*Taxi*, Arifin C. Noer, 1990). In some ways, these were prestige projects for commercial producers, but without their involvement, many of these directors would have struggled to have found production capital. Despite dire predictions by nationalist critics, the film industry continued to grow and expand into the 1980s, with a majority of productions made as entertainment for a popular audience and a smaller amount of more serious art or auteur cinema.

Hopes were pinned on idealist directors to articulate nationalist concerns on film and to realize and sustain *film nasional*. Idealists were seen as possessing artistic credentials and a nationalist sensibility that popular, commercial directors did not have. Directors of popular films tended to be apprentices or graduates of IKJ and were considered technicians operating under the instruction of producers. Idealist directors often had backgrounds in theatre where the focus was much more on performance and the director's vision. Karya, who made a film every other year in the 1980s, devoted much of his creative energies to *Teater Populer* which he had established in 1968. Notable alumni of *Teater Populer* who would later work in film include actors Slamet Rahardjo, Christine Hakim, Alex Komang, and Hengky Solaiman. Most idealist directors either passed away in the 1980s or began to retire in the early 1990s, without making much impact on television. Apart from Rahardjo and his brother (composer Eros Djarot), there were no new artists to carry the mantle of idealism forward. IKJ graduates were artisans or skilled practitioners, rather than artists. As detailed in Chapter 2, a new generation of students from IKJ

sehingga mereka tidak pernah membuat film tentang lingkungannya yang Indonesia, karena itu film mereka bukan film Indonesia. Film-film mereka cuma rekaan dangkal dari impian dan obsesi mereka yang ditopang oleh semangat dagang yang berlebihan." Quoted in Said, *Pantulan Layar Putih*, 193.

42. Mohamad, "An Introduction," 75–82.

though would begin to emerge in the 1990s with a different cultural and cinematic sensibility.

In part, the dilemma for proponents of *film nasional* was as much a consequence of audience preferences as it was of producer orientation. Indonesian audiences preferred watching less serious local films for entertainment, typically horror, comedies, and dramas. Although few audience surveys were conducted, research showed that those from higher socio-economic status preferred watching imported (especially American) films,[43] whereas lower socio-economic audiences preferred genre films from India, Hong Kong, and Indonesia. The majority of local audiences were not interested in the serious, edifying, and nationalist films that proponents of *film nasional* thought they should be watching. Efforts in the 1980s to establish film appreciation clubs called *Kine Klub* on campuses similarly failed to gain traction.[44] The other consequence of these film consumption patterns was that Indonesian films tended to play in the cheaper, lower class cinemas where box office earnings for locally made films were less. It was also cheaper to import rather than make a feature film, so profit margins were also on average lower.[45]

Underlying debates around the role of film were split between the nationalist and the popular. Nationalist films emphasized the role of the artist as able to show audiences insight into their life and thus reflect the "true face" or Indonesia. In contrast, popular films followed audiences and their taste, and offered the opportunity for profit, typically adopting cheap, lewd, or tabloid content to do so. Ami Priyono, who directed twelve films and acted in many more, complained "I would like in fact to produce a film with a real Indonesian image, but we can't determine exactly what the Indonesian image is."[46] If audiences did not want it, it was hard to convince producers. But it was also deceptive because increasingly film would come under the sway of the state and the Department of Information, who were interested in deploying themes of nationalism for the purposes of promoting order as per state ideology. Priyono continued, "Not every film containing criticism should be censored," adding "I am convinced that many films with Indonesian characteristics will be produced if this [criticism] is made possible."[47] So as the New Order consolidated its rule, the edifying and nationalist aims of *film nasional* would dovetail with the New Order's initiatives to control the filmmaking process and on-screen content in the name of order and harmony. The result was that local films became more controlled, predictable, and unable to adapt to changing social and cultural conditions.

43. Jacob Sumardjo, "The Audience Factor in the Production of Indonesian Films," in *Indonesian Film Festival 1990*, ed. Salim Said (Jakarta: Foreign Relations Division Indonesian Film Festival Permanent Committee, 1990), 71–76.
44. Dewan Film Nasional, *Pola Dasar Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Perfilman Nasional* (Jakarta: Dewan Film Nasional, 1980), 82–83; WS Suharto, ed., *Apresiasi Film Indonesia 4* (Jakarta: Direktorat Pembinaan Film dan Rekaman Video, 1999).
45. See, for example, Kelompok Studi Perfilman Sinema Citra, "Menuju Karya Utuh Insan Film Indonesia," Jakarta. February 9, 1987.
46. Ami Priyono, "Intoxicating Distractions Are Most Effective," *Prisma* 7 (1977): 33.
47. Priyono, "Intoxicating Distractions," 34.

Asserting Order

The New Order asserted much more control over the media in the wake of the 1974 Malari Incident (*Malapetaka Lima Belas Januari*, Fifteenth of January Disaster). When Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka visited Indonesia between January 14 to 17, students and others took to the streets expressing deep discontent with the foreign control of the Indonesian economy, corruption, and high prices. Armed troops were deployed to quell the protests and exposed the regime's lack of coordination and control. In the wake of the riots, the state clamped down on all forms of expression, protest, and criticism, especially in the news media but also the still relatively conservative film industry. As early as 1970, critical work began to emerge challenging state ideology including *Romusha* (*Forced Laborer*, SA Karim, 1972) about the cruelty of Japanese occupation in 1944–1945, tragicomedy *Si Mamad* (*Mamad*, Sjuman Djaya, 1973) based on Anton Chekov's 1883 story *The Death of a Government Clerk* about petty corruption, and *Yang Muda Yang Bercinta* (*Young in Love*, Sjuman Djaya, 1977) about student activism, starring poet WS Rendra.[48] *Romusha*, for example, passed censorship but was then banned from screening by the Department of Information for fears it would damage Japan-Indonesia relations.

Filmmakers were not silent in the face of encroaching government control, but their space for protest and dissent increasingly narrowed. Concerns about state restrictions came to a head in 1978 when *Wasdri*, a film about officials abusing their power over the poor, was refused production permission and effectively banned.[49] In response, over a hundred filmmakers launched a protest that Arifin C. Noer declared "is not just about *Wasdri*, but about the question of creativity more generally."[50] The New Order feared cinema could be used to spread anti-government ideas, promote communism, or ferment potential unrest. Yet they also considered film a potent site of indoctrination where it could construct and assert its own ideological vision. As a result, from the late 1970s and into the 1980s the New Order state took a more active role in controlling film production and content through new laws and regulations,[51] and by producing propaganda through the State Film Production company (PFN, Produksi Film Negara).

Although PKI and LEKRA filmmakers no longer worked in the film industry, the New Order continued to seek ways of controlling who could work on or make movies. This included making membership in one of the three government-controlled unions—for producers (PPFI, Persatuan Produser Film Indonesia), workers (KFT, Karyawan Film and Televisi), and artists (PARFI, Persatuan Artis Film

48. Abduh M. Aziz, "Film Indonesia Masa Kini: Bayangbayang Politik Kebudayaan orde Baru," in *Merancang Arah Baru Demokrasi: Indonesia Pasca-Reformasi*, ed. AE Priyono and Usman Hamid (Jakarta: KPG, 2014), 93–103.
49. Director was to be Nico Pelamonia with a script written by Yasso Winarto.
50. "Protes ini tidak cuma menyangkut soal Wasdri, tapi menyangkut masalah kreativitas secara umum." Arifin C. Noer quoted in "Betulkah soalnya hanya 'wasdri'?" *Tempo*, December 17, 1977.
51. Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema*.

Indonesia)—a prerequisite to participating in a film production. Similarly, aspiring directors had to assist on a number of films and then be approved by a board of senior directors before being allowed to helm their own film. This had the effect of socializing younger filmmakers, many of whom were graduates of IKJ, into the prevailing work culture, and limiting the potential for radical practices or beliefs. Scripts had to be submitted to the Department of Information for vetting prior to production. Before exhibition, completed films had to be submitted for censorship with the Film Censorship Board (Lembaga Sensor Film, LSF). All these measures made filmmakers risk averse and more conservative, resulting in safe content that became predictable and less interesting for audiences.

Organizing the film industry into functional organizations that were integrated into state structures reflected New Order corporatism.[52] In the film industry, this meant that organizations representing producers (PPFI), cinemas (GPBSI), crews and directors (KFT), artists (PARFI), and importers (AFI) were no longer driven by the political interests of their members, but subordinate to the Minister of Information in the interests of *film nasional*. This mode of governance was supported ideologically by the New Order's brand of organicism by reiterating concepts such as order, harmony, and hierarchy.[53] Criticism and dissent were discouraged in favor of consensus-building, with problems discussed in general rather than specific terms. In industry documents of the time, film is positioned as a tool for national development and conceptualized in its role as a medium for education, enlightenment, entertainment, and as assisting with the national struggle.[54] Decisions were to be subordinated to the interests of development and nation-building as articulated by the state and the Department of Information.

The New Order's vision for film was enshrined in a code of ethics introduced in 1980 following a 1979 conference in which Information Minister Ali Moertopo mooted the concept of "educational and cultural films."[55] As Krishna Sen has noted,[56] this code of ethics was more concerned with ensuring films promoted stability and harmony than with regulating sexual or violent content. According to Sen, films from this era conform to a "return to order" narrative arc.[57] A film would typically begin with a harmonious family or village, whose peace and stability is disrupted by a criminal, ghost, immoral character, or similar agent of disorder. After enduring the chaos and disorder, order would be restored by the arrival of an agent of the state, typically a policeman, military officer and/or a religious leader. This narrative arc could be read as an ideological reminder of the New Order's foundational myth

52. Andrew MacIntyre, "Organising Interests: Corporatism in Indonesian Politics," Working Paper No. 43, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, 1994. https://www.murdoch.edu.au/Research-capabilities/Asia-Research-Centre/_document/working-papers/WP43.pdf.
53. David Bourchier and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2014), 9.
54. See, for example, Kelompok Studi Perfilman Sinema Citra, "Menuju Karya Utuh Insan," 10.
55. Said, *Shadows*, 123.
56. Sen, *Indonesian Cinema*, 70.
57. Sen, *Indonesian Cinema*.

in that the regime saved Indonesia from the political and economic tumult of the 1960s. In particular, discord was caused by immoral behavior, disrespect towards authority, or alternative ideas. Read ideologically, these threats could be equated with the communism or the PKI who could be summoned anytime as a bogeyman that threatened national unity and stability.[58]

In 1982, the New Order began production of Noer's *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September (The Betrayal of the 30 September Movement*, 1984)—based on the "official" version of events as written by army historian Nugroho Notosusanto—in a clear effort at propagandizing the population. Noer was instructed to make the film as atonement for an undisclosed prior infraction. While it was not the only film made about 1965–1966, it clearly dramatizes the New Order's version of events. *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September* shows members of the PKI plotting a coup, then kidnapping and murdering the six generals, and includes scenes of torture and what appears to be an orgy of sadism involving women from Gerwani, the PKI-affiliated women's organization,[59] before switching into a docu-fiction mode as the bodies are exhumed under the supervision of a charismatic General Suharto (Amoroso Katamsi). The three-hour film was screened every year on September 30—broadcast on national television with compulsory screenings for school children—to further inculcate the idea that the New Order and the military had saved the nation from the threat of the PKI. Released nineteen years after the events that brought the New Order to power, the film was clearly aimed at younger Indonesians who had not lived through the 1960s but who needed reminding about what had happened in 1965 to legitimize the New Order regime.

Control over film was strict, but like the Hays Production Code in classical Hollywood, it was also absurd as there were means of evading the regulations. Decisions about scripts submitted for pre-approval could be capricious and prone to corruption, allowing film producers to pay to have their scripts treated more leniently. In one instance, producer Raam Punjabi recalls being asked to change the name of a female character (Sisca) in a film because a minister's wife shared the same name.[60] In the case of *Perawan Desa* (*Village Virgin*, Frank Rorimpandey, 1978) which was based on a true story, the end of the film had to be reshot to fit demands from the Department of Information for an ideologically correct closure.[61] Titles exported overseas often riled bureaucrats because they did not pass domestic censorship beforehand, thus risking a negative impression of Indonesia overseas. In other cases, film producers were known to submit a version of the film to the

58. Ariel Heryanto, "Indonesian Middle-Class Opposition in the 1990s," in *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*, ed. Garry Rodan (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 241–71.

59. Saskia Eleonora Wieringa, "Sexual Slander and the 1965–66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations," *ARI Working Paper*, National University of Singapore, 2009. http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps09_125.pdf.

60. This was the wife of Soedomo, then minister of manpower (1983–1988). Alberthiene Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2005), 170.

61. Krishna Sen and David T. Hill, *Media, Culture, and Politics in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 144–45.

censors to be cut, but then played the uncut version in cinemas. In the 1990s (and possibly earlier), unqualified directors could buy the names of senior directors, so they could direct a film even though they had not been approved to do so. Others who did not want to subject themselves to the regulations governing feature film production often moved into documentary, such as Johan Teranggi who set up Cinevisi and worked on projects for foreign broadcasters.

Despite these regulations and controls, the 1980s saw the expansion of cinema as an important part of the nation's popular culture. Cinemas mushroomed across the archipelago, numbering over fifteen hundred by the mid-1980s, with annual production reaching peaks in the early and late 1980s of over hundred films per year. Audiences enjoyed horror, action and *silat* martial arts, comedies, and dramas. The era gave rise to a new generation of stars including Barry Prima, Suzzanna, Benyamin S, Lenny Marlina, and Rima Melati. Comedy trio Warkop (Warung Kopi, Coffee Stall) became iconic for their cheeky humor and featured in over thirty-five films between 1979 and 1994 with titles such as *Depan Bisa Belakang Bisa* (*From in Front or Behind*, Tjut Djalil, 1987) and *Mana Bisa Tahan* (*Impossible to Hold On*, Arizal, 1990). These often contained humorous references to state regulations or satirized bureaucratic procedures. Despite this buoyant period, concerns were increasingly expressed about the cost pressures in the industry and the failure to invest in new infrastructure and equipment. Although Indonesia had its own color film processing lab in Jakarta called Interstudio (established by Njoo Han Siang and later run by his nephew Rudy Sanyoto), a lack of investment meant Indonesian films increasingly looked inferior to imported titles. Interstudio did not have the facilities for negative transfer so negatives still had to be sent overseas—to Tokyo, Hong Kong, and later to Bangkok and India—to be processed ready for print duplication. Sound was often completed in Tokyo or Sydney.

Beginning in 1981, through a joint effort between commercial producers and state film agencies, overseas sales were sought for Indonesian films at film markets in the Philippines, Hong Kong, United States, the Middle East, and in Europe. Producers opened new revenue streams by tapping into national and regional distribution circuits, aided by growing home videocassette markets.[62] Indonesian films played well in exploitation and b-grade circuits, especially when at a film market in Manila in 1982 the exploitation titles *Primitives* (*Primitif*, Sisworo Gautama, 1978), *Five Deadly Angels* (*Lima Cewek Jagoan*, Danu Umbara, 1980) and *The Queen of Black Magic* (*Ratu Ilmu Hitam*, Lilik Sudjio, 1979) sold well. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, Parkit Films, Soraya Intercine, and Rapi Films continued to produce for export with notable titles including *The Warrior* (*Jaka Sembung*, Sisworo Gautama Putra, 1981), *Virgins from Hell* (*Perawan Disarang Sindikat*, Ackyl Anwari, 1987), and *Lady Terminator* (*Pembalasan Ratu Laut Selatan*, Tjut Djalil, 1989). Oftentimes these productions used Caucasian actors, either recruited locally

62. Thomas Barker, "Exploiting Indonesia: From Primitives to Outraged Fugitives," *Plaridel* 11, no. 2 (2014): 1–22. http://www.plarideljournal.org/article/exploiting-indonesia-from-primitives-to-outraged-fugitives/.

or brought in from Hong Kong or the US. By the late 1980s and early 1990s some of these productions were high-concept action films replete with helicopter sequences and destructive car chases with budgets of up to USD 1 million. US martial arts actress Cynthia Rothrock starred in a series of films,[63] and Christopher Noth—who would go on to take a lead role in the US TV series *Sex and the City* (1998–2004)—had his first lead role in the Indonesian produced action film *Peluru dan Wanita* (*Jakarta*, Charles Kaufman and Eddy G Bakker, 1987). Criticized at the time for creating a bad impression of Indonesia overseas, international sales gave local companies much needed income at a time when proceeds from local tickets sales were declining. Many titles have since been rediscovered and earned cult status.[64]

Film Monopoly

State controls notwithstanding, the economics of film production, distribution, and exhibition further discouraged producers and filmmakers from taking risks and pushing boundaries. As almost all producers were based in Jakarta, they did not deal directly with cinemas but sold their films to distributors (or brokers), who managed the eleven distribution areas across the archipelago. Typically, brokers would pay a fixed price for a film, half up front and the other half if the film sold well, usually on a post-dated check. Thus, film producers received only a fixed income, whilst brokers profiteered from knowing how much a distribution area earned and took the profits if a film was popular with audiences. Brokers became wealthy and powerful, often dictating to producers the types of films or stars they wanted, with some becoming cinema owners or producers themselves (such as Hatoek Soebroto of Elang Perkasa). Little money was to be made in film production, and producers often operated on slim profit margins. For Jakarta-based producers such as Ali Hasan of Inem Films, knowing exactly how much he would earn from the eleven distribution areas meant he knew in advance his maximum production budget and so rationalized production costs accordingly.[65] Between 1978 and 1994, Inem Films produced over one hundred titles. However, there was little incentive for producers to increase budgets, take risks, or innovate unless they had other sources of income.

Parallel to the development of state control over the film industry and stagnation in the distribution sector, Suharto's cousin and foster brother Sudwikatmono came to dominate film imports and exhibition nationwide through his Subentra group of companies. As detailed in Chapter 5, Sudwikatmono entered the film import business in the 1970s with the PT Suptan company, and by the early 1980s essentially

63. *Pertempuran Segi Tiga* (*Angel of Fury*, David Worth and Ackyl Anwari, 1990), *Tiada Titik Balik* (*Lady Dragon*, David Worth and Ackyl Anwari, 1992), *Bidadari Berambut Emas* (*Lady Dragon 2*, Ackyl Anwari, 1992), and *Membela Harga Diri* (*Rage and Honour II: Hostile Takeover*, Ackyl Anwari, 1993).

64. Ekky Imanjaya, "The Other Side of Indonesia: New Order's Indonesian Exploitation Cinema as Cult Films," *COLLOQUY text theory critique* 18, Monash University, 2009. http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/colloquy/download/colloquy_issue_eighteen/iminjaya.pdf; Barker, "Exploiting Indonesia."

65. John A Lent, ed., *The Asian Film Industry* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 208.

controlled film imports into the country. This was made possible by taking control of the four import consortiums, established in the early 1970s to regulate and delegate import quotas. Leveraging on his important monopoly, Sudwikatmono moved into the exhibition business establishing the Cinema 21 chain of movie theaters in the mid-1980s, vertically integrating import, distribution, and exhibition. Over the 1980s, Subentra either partnered with existing cinema operators or forced them to join the Cinema 21 family. Many of the Cinema 21 theaters were built in the new shopping malls appearing in the major cities across Indonesia that were becoming integral to the consumption patterns of Indonesia's growing middle class. A title would play in Jakarta for an average of two months before reaching the regional and lower-class cinemas, further disadvantaging smaller, independent cinemas.

In order to cater to this emerging middle class, film producers needed to be more attuned to their tastes and the latest trends in pop culture. Producers however remained focused on the mass market in rural and regional areas, and in lower class audiences. Although a potentially large market, the structures of distribution and exhibition were such that producers earned only a fixed income. With little room to innovate and being risk adverse, local producers had few incentives to cater to the emerging, urbane middle-class audience. Two films that did tap into this new middle-class market and show its potential were *Catatan Si Boy* (*Boy's Notes*, Nasri Cheppy, 1987), funded by Sudwikatmono, and *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti* (*Love in a Slice of Bread*, Garin Nugroho, 1991). Both films sought to represent issues relevant to the middle class, namely the wish to be cool but pious in the case of the eponymous Boy character, and the dilemmas of a love-triangle for the three young adults in *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti*. Overwhelmingly, however, there were few local productions that attracted local middle-class audiences whose consumption preferences were aligned with Hollywood cinema.

Cinema 21 wielded so much power that they were able to override the screen quota stipulated in the SKB 3 Menteri from 1975. An informal agreement in 1986 between select importers, distributors, and cinema owners called the *Kesepakatan Cipayung* (Cipayung Agreement) put a minimum audience criterion on the screen quota.[66] This meant many local films playing in Cinema 21 theaters were replaced after one day because they did not meet the minimum audience number. Whilst more popular local films drew enough viewers to sustain themselves in lower class cinemas, more difficult or art films struggled. In effect, this pushed Indonesian films out of the first-run Cinema 21 theaters and into the few remaining independent cinemas where audiences were smaller and ticket prices lower. The Cinema 21 Group's policies only came to light when *Langitku Rumahku* (*My Sky My Home*, Slamet Rahardjo and Eros Djarot, 1990) was pulled from the cinemas after only one day and the filmmakers went public with their protests. They sought to sue the Cinema 21 Group for breaching the 1975 regulation but found instead that the

66. A Rahim Latief, "Dominasi Film Impor Dan Dilema Film Nasional," *Media Indonesia*, March 2, 1991.

regulation had secretly been altered in Cinema 21's favor. Other filmmakers joined a growing protest against the "21 monopoly" with a public demonstration held in 1991, but little could be changed. Sudwikatmono denied accusations of a monopoly, enjoying the protection of Information Minister Harmoko who had previously defended the Cinema 21 Group saying "everything is operating according to the prevailing regulations. . . . The talk of a monopoly is not true."[67]

With the dominant position of Hollywood films assured in Indonesia's cinemas, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) began to pressure Indonesia about its film import regulations and quota restrictions. The early 1990s saw the United States pursuing an aggressive free trade agenda, opening new markets, especially for the audio-visual industries which needed to expand globally to support increased budgets and maintain profit margins.[68] Although the stated agenda was to pressure Indonesia to dissolve the film import consortiums in the name of free trade, MPEAA representative Stephen Clug revealed the real aim of the trade dispute with Indonesia: "The problem is the government regulation that only allows American films to be distributed through an importer. *And also the issue of quotas*."[69] Indonesia

Figure 1.1: Actors Sophan Sophiaan (*left*) and Slamet Rahardjo Djarot (*center*) lead a protest of filmmakers at the Parliament Building against Sudwikatmono's monopoly in Jakarta, 1991. Photograph from Tempo / Hidayat SG.

67. "Semua berfungsi sesuai dengan mekanisme yang berlaku . . . Kabar monopoli itu tidak benar." Budi Kusuma, Sri Pudyastuti and Tri Budianto Soekarno, "Kerajaan film impor," *Tempo* (Jakarta), July 22, 1989.
68. Miller et al., *Global Hollywood*.
69. Italics added by author. "Problemnya adalah peraturan pemerintah yang hanya mengizinkan mengalirnya film AS melalui importir. Dan juga soal kuota." "Sinepleks tanpa singa mengaum," *Tempo* 48, January 27, 1990.

was placed on the USTR 301 Watchlist with the USTR threatening to limit exports of Indonesian textiles to America if quotas were not removed. Over the 1980s, the quota for American films had declined steadily, reaching eighty titles with a maximum of eighteen prints by 1991.

Following negotiations, Indonesia relented, and passed the new Film Law No. 8 in 1992, which in part abolished import consortiums and increased import quotas. The Cinema 21 Group further consolidated its position when in 1991 it began entering into exclusive agreements with MPEAA (Motion Pictures Export Association of America) member companies to import and distribute their films in Indonesia. Bypassing both the consortiums and local importers, import and exhibition were centralized by the Cinema 21 Group and gave Hollywood films a direct route into the first-run cinemas. Ostensibly this was to avoid the scenario in which a film was broadcast on television at the same time it was in the cinema (as happened in October 1991 with John Milius' 1989 film *Farewell to the King*).[70] It meant that the release date for Hollywood films in Indonesia could be concurrent with other markets around the world, ahead of television broadcast and before pirated VHS copies could arrive. This integrated Indonesia more deeply into US-dominated circuits of cultural trade and subject the local industry to global market forces, pushing Indonesian productions further into the periphery where audiences and returns were much lower. The 1992 Film Law did little to address the structural problems in the industry, and further codified state regulations and controls. Local production would continue to decline for another decade.

The 1990s: *Mati Suri* (In a Coma)

As the New Order entered its final decade, competing forces and pressures mounted, causing the state to further repress art, culture and the media. *Layar tancap* (mobile screenings) which had been an important form of popular entertainment in villages without dedicated cinemas were now limited to private functions, because public screenings attracted large crowds who could threaten public order. Without public screenings, many operators lost income and went out of business. From 1989 onwards private television broadcasters began operation and by 1995 five stations were broadcasting nationally. Not only was content free to view, but television watching in villages was often communal, which pulled further potential audiences away from cinemas to the small screen. In the television sector, stations competed fiercely to attract viewers so as to earn higher advertising income. This injected an energy and competitiveness into the sector, in stark contrast to feature filmmaking. The effect of the new film law, the rise of private television, and Cinema 21's turn to Hollywood, marked the beginning of the end for Indonesian cinema as it entered the 1990s.

70. Djoko Darmoyo, "Bioskop vs Televisi Berebut Film Cerita dan Persoalan yang Rumit," *Bintang*, no. 32, October 1991, 3.

Yet television was a godsend for film producers and industry workers who had struggled to find stable employment despite the apparent boom in production during the 1980s. Journalist Rosihan Anwar reported in 1988 that more than half of the registered film workers (actors and technical) could not get work, and only forty-one of ninety-five registered directors were directing films.[71] Although stations such as RCTI began broadcasting with 95 percent foreign content, regulations were soon introduced requiring 40 percent of content to be locally produced. Film producers and workers quickly adjusted to television, which was awash with money from advertising. A new genre akin to soap opera emerged called *sinetron*, a syncopation of *sinema elektronik* (electronic cinema), a nod to the former film companies behind its production (discussed further in Chapter 6). Some regarded television as a revolution for *film nasional*, seeing it as a continuation of the cinematic form in a new medium.[72] In 1995, private television attracted 3,345 trillion rupiah in advertising revenue, whereas cinemas only attracted eleven billion.[73] Directors could earn fifteen million rupiah per episode of *sinetron* which could be shot in a day, com-

Figure 1.2: Posters advertising *Susuk Nyi Roro Kidul* (*The Implant of Nyi Roro Kidul*, Azwar AN, 1993), *Kenikmatan Tabu* (*Taboo Pleasures*, Ackyl Anwari, 1993), and *Nafsu dalam Cinta* (*Lust in Love*, Tommy Burnama, 1994) outside a cinema in Jakarta, 1994. Photograph from Tempo / Rully Kesuma.

71. H. Rosihan Anwar, "The Indonesian Film Industry," Seminar on Asian Films: Survival or Revival, Singapore, January 26–28, 1988.
72. "Revolusi perfilman nasional." See "Sinema Televisi, Awal Revolusi Perfilman Nasional," *Bintang*, no. 5, April 1991, 16.
73. Sen and Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics*, 115.

pared to thirty million for a complete feature film which might take up to a month to complete.[74] Television not only represented a boon for workers and producers, it marked a dramatic shift in the media landscape of Indonesia as commercial stations were ratings driven and actively sought audiences by catering to their tastes. Private television therefore became one of the primary mediums for the dissemination of mainstream pop culture.

Those who remained in the commercial film industry turned to sexual content in an attempt to retain audiences. Titles such as *Ranjang yang Ternoda* (*Stained Bed*, Norman Benny, 1993), *Kenikmatan Tabu* (*Taboo Pleasures*, Ackyl Anwari, 1994), and *Nafsu dalam Cinta* (*Desire in Love*, Tommy Burnama and Emil G Hampp, 1994) became commonplace. These films increasingly caught the ire of the public, and producers were called into the LSF to explain the increase in nudity and sexual activity. Offering "spice" (*bumbu*) producers said, was the only way to attract dwindling audiences. Producer Ram Soraya of Soraya Intercine says he "asked that there be an inducement for the audience, so that they would go to the cinemas that screened Indonesian films. The LSF agreed. The cinemas overflowed again, but only the low-class cinemas."[75] Production continued to decline throughout the 1990s, and the preponderance of adult content further marginalized local films in the eyes of mainstream audiences. Beyond these venues, producers could not earn additional income since adult content could not be broadcast on television and had little potential for export overseas.[76] The remaining film producers had effectively backed themselves into a corner.

Some hope for the film industry seemed to appear in the figure of Garin Nugroho, who graduated from IKJ in 1985 and made a number of documentaries, before turning to feature films in the 1990s. Most graduates of IKJ in the 1980s had little option but to work in the state-controlled film industry (and later television), but a few such as Nugroho chose to make documentaries, which afforded a comparatively greater degree of artistic freedom. Nugroho's documentaries and feature films began to gain recognition and win awards at overseas film festivals, gaining him income to maintain his autonomy and a degree of international stature that he could use as leverage at home. Following his debut feature film *Cinta Dalam Sepotong Roti*, Nugroho received local funding from television station TPI for *Surat untuk Bidadari* (*Letter to an Angel*, 1994). Needing a film to submit to the Asia Pacific Film Festival in 1995, the PFN funded *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (*And the Moon Dances*, 1995). *Daun di Atas Bantal* (*Leaf on a Pillow*, 1997) made two years later received overseas funding. With many of the previous generation of artistic

74. Hendrix Gozali, personal interview, June 19, 2008.

75. "Saya minta supaya ada pancingan buat penonton, supaya mereka mau masuk bioskop yang memutar film Indonesia. BSF setuju. Dan bioskop luber lagi, bioskop kelas bawah tapi." R. Pudyastuti, Sri, Wahyu Muryadi and Indrawan, "Suara dari balik seluloid yang panas itu," *Tempo*, June 25, 1994.

76. While there is a market for such content in the world, a combination of unattractive content (Indonesian films were not as racy or explicit as films from Hong Kong or Japan for example) and a lack of funds to promote product overseas limited any export potential.

filmmakers reaching the end of their careers, Nugroho seemed to carry the mantle of filmmaker-as-artist forward.

Like other artist-filmmakers before him, Nugroho was assumed to have significant political and cultural power. For some, he was expected to save *film nasional* and boost local production following in the tradition of Ismail and other idealist filmmakers. For others—especially observers outside Indonesia who decried the authoritarian nature of the New Order—Nugroho was expected to expose the regime through his work.[77] Nugroho could never live up to these expectations, and although he produced significant work in this period and stood as a critic of the New Order regime he was a single filmmaker with limited clout. His films had limited circulation within Indonesia due to their esoteric nature and his status as an art director rather than a commercial one with mainstream appeal. He did, however, forge a new type of production method that was less producer-centric, and an aesthetic and subject matter informed by his anthropological documentary filmmaking. He often worked outside Jakarta—beyond the purview of the Jakarta-based Department of Information, working without the requisite permissions—in places unrepresented in mainstream filmmaking or on national television, thus offering an alternative vision of Indonesia.

State funding of feature films had been sporadic, often coming through military agencies, rather than the state film agencies. PFN funded mostly documentaries as educational media in the service of the national development agenda. Just before the New Order fell in 1998, the misguided nature of state-funded projects was evident in *Fatahillah* (Chaerul Umam and Imam Tantowi, 1997), a collaboration between GPBSI and Pemda DKI (Jakarta Local Government) costing USD 1.2 million, making it one of the most expensive films ever produced in Indonesia. Made to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Jakarta, the film is based on the life of the devout Muslim warrior Fatahillah who defeated the Portuguese in 1527, naming the city Jayakarta ("City of Victory"). Jakarta mayor Surjadi Soedirdja expected the film "to support the current film industry whose condition is worrying. Hopefully after *Fatahillah*, many producers will make good films."[78] Civil servants were mobilized to watch the film, but it tanked, and tellingly scriptwriter Misbach Yusa Biran makes no mention of the film in his 2008 autobiography.[79] *Fatahillah* was evidence of New Order hubris and the financial mismanagement that was symptomatic of the New Order economy.

77. David Hanan, "Garin Nugroho: Refusing the Stereotype, Challenges Posed by Indonesia's Filmmaker of the 1990s," In *And the Moon Dances: The Films of Garin*, ed. Philip Cheah (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 2004), 144–83. Kenji Ishizaka, "Garin Nugroho: Fighting with Films," in *And the Moon Dances: The Films of Garin*, ed. Philip Cheah (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 2004), 100–16.
78. "Kita bersama-sama menghimpun kekuatan untuk mendukung perfilman nasional yang saat ini memprihatinkan. Semoga setelah film Fatahillah akan banyak produser yang akan membuat film-film yang baik" "Film Fatahillah Dibuat Dengan Dana Rp 2,5 Miliar," *Suara Pembaruan*, November 17, 1996.
79. H Misbach Yusa Biran, *Kenang-Kenangan Orang Bandel* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2008).

The End of New Order Cinema

By the end of the 1990s, Indonesian cinema had reached a crisis point. This was due to a combination of state control, economic stagnation due to monopolization, and a misguided belief that the filmmaker-as-artist could provide the leadership and popularity to overturn the commercial industry and realize *film nasional*. The cinema was no longer the site of mainstream popular culture that it once was. The film industry had been vibrant in the 1970s and 1980s offering national audiences a common focal point of identification and entertainment. Yet local producers and filmmakers could not keep up with the rapid technological and cultural changes that began to shift audience tastes and expectations through the 1980s and into the 1990s. New Order cinema could not respond to the changing market conditions hampered as it was by the regime's political economy. The model of cinema developed under the New Order was now unviable through a combination of political and institutional control, competition from global media, and new technologies that rendered Indonesian productions inferior.

The Asian Financial Crisis that impacted Indonesia in 1997–1998 and which led to Suharto resigning as President in May 1998 bankrupted many in the film business, as it did across the broader economy. The financial crisis exacerbated the pre-existing economic problems within the film industry, forcing companies to cancel productions, cinemas to close, and pushed many permanently into the television industry. This marked an end of the production relationships, institutional arrangements, and power structures that ossified under the New Order. This was a necessary reset to the film industry that allowed new players, modes of working, and ideas to enter the industry so that new forms of production could emerge after 1998. When filmmaking restarted during *reformasi*—the years between 1998 and 2003—the film industry had to start from scratch as it sought new sources of capital, stories and talent, learning the craft of filmmaking anew, and convincing audiences that Indonesian films were worth paying for. This is what was required to make Indonesian cinema mainstream again.

2
From Indie to Mainstream

Opening Cinemas, Finding Audiences

Throughout my research for this book, a number of interviewees described Indonesian cinema of the 1990s as "*mati suri*" ("in a coma"). Even if the Indonesian cinema of the time was not dead as such, it was close to it. Some films were produced over the decade, but what little was made was no longer mainstream. Indonesian films still in circulation were the sex films, as noted in the previous chapter, which were relegated to peripheral, lower-class cinemas. Mainstream production had collapsed, with the majority of workers and producers moving to television where the audiences now were. The task of reintroducing film back into the mainstream would require overcoming significant obstacles: the Cinema 21 Group would have to play Indonesian films again; audiences would have to want to go to the cinema to watch Indonesian films; and new filmmakers would have to not only revitalize production but realign feature film with prevailing fashions and tastes in mainstream pop culture, all of which had changed throughout the 1990s. Conventional analysis dates the reemergence of Indonesia's feature film industry to 1998 and the years of *reformasi* up to 2003, the beginnings of the revival really began some years earlier at the beginning of the 1990s.

Despite its power, the New Order in its final years faced growing discontent and opposition from various sectors of civil society and the media. In May 1993, the labor activist Marsinah was kidnapped and murdered in East Java, bringing critical attention both domestically and internationally to the regime's shocking methods of oppression. A year later, news publications *Tempo*, *Detik*, and *Editor* were shut down following critical reporting of the regime's purchase of East German submarines. *Tempo* moved online and began to inform a growing community of Indonesian Internet users who would become important constituents of anti-regime movements leading up to the resignation of Suharto.[1] While the Internet was then limited to users in major urban centers, private television also began to challenge the information monopoly of the New Order as stations looked for alternative ways to report and comment on social and economic affairs not limited to the compulsory TVRI

1. Sen and Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics*, 194–217.

news reports.[2] State power was challenged in myriad of ways from a range of social forces it could no longer contain.

As much as it tried, the New Order could not prevent the inward flow of culture and ideas that proposed new forms of expression and thinking antithetical to the developmentalist and nation-building themes of the New Order. Changes in global media industries brought about by globalization and new broadcast technologies carried fresh ideas and content to young Indonesian audiences. In the United States, filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez showed that it was possible for indie filmmakers to break into Hollywood, the epitome of a large, conservative media industry. Rodriguez became an icon for aspiring filmmakers around the world when he made and released *El Mariachi* (1992) and the accompanying book *Rebel Without a Crew*,[3] detailing how he made *El Mariachi* for USD 8,000. In Europe, Danish directors Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, and Susanne Bier advocated minimalist filmmaking without big budgets and excessive props through their Dogme 95 manifesto released in 1995.[4] In Hong Kong, Wong Kar Wai's melancholic but rich filmmaking opened up new possibilities in storytelling and cinematography, and reignited global interest in new Asian art cinema. Taken together, the increased availability and range of cultural products along with a rebellious DIY sensibility within youth subcultures provided inspiration for young people across the world, including in Indonesia.[5]

Young and Creative in the 1990s

By the 1990s, a new generation of Indonesians were leaving school and university and entering the entertainment industries as aspiring creatives. Born in the late 1960s and 1970s, this generation had not lived through the turmoil of the early 1960s, and although subject to the annual propaganda of *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September*, they had grown up in a period of growing affluence, changing media technologies, and an expansion of the consumer economy. Coming from the emerging middle class, many would harbor aspirations of creative self-expression and a desire to work in the media and creative industries. However, when this generation wanted to enter the New Order media industry they found their options limited, and most of them ended up making advertisements, music videos, and documentaries. Young screen creatives such as Richard Buntario, Jay Subiyakto, Sentot Sahid, Rizal Mantovani, Riri Riza, Aria Kusumadewa, and Jose Poernomo began to make names for themselves as content producers for television—mostly advertisements and music videos. Subiyakto directed Chrisye's first video clip "*Pergilah Kasih*" ("Go

2. Ishadi SK, *Media dan Kekuasaan: Televisi di hari terakhir Presiden Soeharto* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2014).
3. Robert Rodriguez, *Rebel Without a Crew, Or How a 23-Year-Old Filmmaker with $7,000 Became a Hollywood Player* (New York: Plume, 1996).
4. John Roberts, "Dogme 95," *New Left Review* I (1999): 238.
5. Brent Luvaas, *DIY Style Fashion, Music and Global Digital Cultures* (London and New York: Berg, 2012).

My Love") in 1990; it went on to be the first Indonesian music video broadcast on MTV Asia. After MTV was established locally, Buntario and Mantovani won best video in 1995 for "*Cuma Khayalan*" ("Only a Fantasy") by singer Oppie Andaresta.

While many may have wanted to make feature films because of the prestige of the cinema and the potential authorial control it allowed, the film industry at that time stifled these aspirations. New Order restrictions remained in place, and many were unwilling to undergo the accreditation procedures needed to become a "qualified" feature film director. When Garin Nugroho began making films without the proper accreditation, he was called to a meeting of the KFT in 1990 and reprimanded by members and senior directors. Nugroho continued making films anyway. A young Riza, then a student at IKJ, who witnessed this process called it "weird."[6] When he graduated from IKJ in 1993 with the short film *Sonata Kampong Bata* (*Sonata of the Brick Village*, 1993) that won third place at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Riza did a variety of media work including music videos, advertisements, and as production manager on Nugroho's *Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang* (*. . . and the Moon Dances*, 1995). It was, therefore, in music video and advertising that these young filmmakers-to-be found work, learned new visual languages, and gained a sense of the interests and desires of their young Indonesian audiences. At the same time, they were acutely aware of the changes and developments happening in the media industries globally and would later draw inspiration from these when making feature films.

Although it is impossible to date exactly when the feature film revival was born in Indonesia, a significant step came when Mira Lesmana and Riri Riza produced *Anak Seribu Pulau* (*Children of a Thousand Islands*, 1996), a twelve-part television series. Lesmana, a young television producer and sometime director, was asked in the mid-1990s to make a television series to commemorate thirty years of the New Order and to celebrate the success of development across the archipelago. Unwilling to make blatant propaganda and wanting to make something more innovative, Lesmana proposed a series focusing on children. When she pitched the idea to television executives they resisted, but Information Minister Harmoko liked the idea and commissioned the project. To make the series, Lesmana and Riza hired Nan Achnas, Nugroho, Enison Sinaro, and Subiyakto, amongst others, as episode directors. On its release, *Anak Seribu Pulau* was hailed as an artistic and commercial success.[7] Lesmana and her colleagues realized that they were talented and passionate media players who shared frustrated dreams of making feature films.

Following *Anak Seribu Pulau*, Riza, Lesmana, Mantovani, Achnas, and Shanty Harmayn (as producer), began work on a feature film to be called *Kuldesak* (*Culde-sac*, 1998). Mantovani had not worked on *Anak Seribu Pulau*, but knew the

6. Riri Riza, personal communication, September 30, 2008.
7. Karen Strassler, "Stories of Culture: Difference, Nation and Childhood in 'Children of a Thousand Island' an Indonesian Television Series," *SIGHTS – Visual Anthropology Forum*, 1999. http://cc.joensuu.fi/sights/karens.htm.

Figure 2.1: Budi (Harry Suharyadi) and Dina (Oppie Andaresta) contemplate their dead-end lives in 1990s Jakarta in *Kuldesak* (1998). Image courtesy of Days for Night.

team and also harbored desires to make a feature film. Inspired by the anthology *Four Rooms* (1995), which featured directors Quentin Tarantino, Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockell, and Robert Rodriguez, and drawing inspiration from grunge musician Kurt Cobain and featuring local rap singer Iwa-K as one of the lead actors, the four directors put together a film that expressed the dead-end experiences of young people living under the New Order during the 1990s.[8] As Riza noted in a 2005 interview: "When we made *Kuldesak*, we saw that the film world was full of old people. . . . Whereas for us young people, film has to be democratic. When youth make film it has to be thematically close to young people."[9]

Adopting a guerrilla style of filmmaking and shooting almost exclusively at night, they worked without any of the required permissions or approvals. Making *Kuldesak* was possible because of the generosity of friends and contacts in the advertising and television industry who lent their time and expertise to the project.

8. For more on *Kuldesak*, see Marshall Clark, "Men, Masculinities and Symbolic Violence in Recent Indonesian Cinema," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, no. 1 (2004): 113–31.
9. "Riri Reza: On Interview," *Bisnis Indonesia*, October 30, 2005. "Saat kami membuat *Kuldesak*, itu karena kita melihat dunia film begitu membosankan dan hanya diisi oleh orang-orang tua. . . . Sedangkan bagi generasi muda. Film harus demokratis. Kalau anak muda bikin film ya harus bertema hal yang dekat dengan anak muda."

Figure 2.2: Harry "Dagoe" Suharyadi on the set of *Kuldesak* (1998) stands in front of a New Order billboard featuring President Suharto. Photograph courtesy of Harry Suharyadi.

Excess film stock was collected from various commercial projects the team were involved with at the time. Equipment company Elang Perkasa (Hatoek Subroto) lent the filmmakers equipment for free, and friends donated time, locations, and other materials. As the value of the rupiah plummeted during the Asian Financial Crisis, additional funding was obtained from the Hubert Bals Fund (International Film Festival Rotterdam) for the expensive negative transfer and print costs. In total, *Kuldesak* took two years to make from its inception in 1996 to its release in November 1998.

Although parts of *Kuldesak* criticize the New Order directly, it expresses a broader discontent with the realities of life under an oppressive regime. Dina (Oppie Andaresta) who works in a cinema box office dreams of a better life; Andre (Ryan Hidayat) is alienated, and loses all hope when he learns that his idol, singer Kurt Cobain, has committed suicide. Another section of the film is a direct commentary on the state of Indonesian filmmaking in the 1990s, with Aksan (Wong Aksan) desperate to make a film. Talking to his friend Aladin (Tio Pakusadewo), he espouses the philosophy of the *Kuldesak* filmmakers themselves:

> It's all right if it's a bit Westernized. The generation today is like that. It's a developed country. It's okay, a film should reflect its period. Don't be another Teguh Karya,

> Eros Djarot, Sjumandjaja and who's the other director who always wins in festivals, what's his name? Garin Nugroho! . . . Give choices for the audience, choices.[10]

Stylistically, *Kuldesak* was an innovative film, and the first in Indonesian film history to adopt an anthology structure. Established critics such as J. B. Kristanto dismissed it as inconsequential,[11] but others saw the potential and monumental change that the film represented for Indonesian pop culture; Leila Chudori writing in *Tempo* called the filmmakers "new kids on the block."[12] During its three-month run, the film was seen by over 130,000 people. One viewer, born in 1980, described *Kuldesak* to me by saying it "*mewakili aku*" (represented me).

Kuldesak was culturally significant as an expression of new youth culture, and for showing that it was possible to make and release a feature film despite the restrictive economic and political conditions of the New Order. It also showed the inter-relationship between music video and new feature film production. But what is often unremarked is its most significant contribution: it was released in Cinema 21 theaters. The *Kuldesak* team managed this because they were able to secure a personal meeting with Sudwikatmono. In the meeting, they showed Sudwikatmono a trailer of the film to show that their project was serious, and even though it had not been made with any of the requisite permissions or qualifications, Sudwikatmono said that as long as the film passed censorship, Cinema 21 would show it. After completion, *Kuldesak* went through censorship with a few cuts, and Cinema 21 screened the film. Neither the LSF nor Cinema 21 cared that the film had been illegally made, an indication that the New Order state was no longer as powerful and decisive as it had once been and that many of the previous rules and regulations would no longer be enforced.

By opening their cinemas to *Kuldesak*, a local production, the opportunity to screen films in Cinema 21 theaters was extended to other local filmmakers. In the changed political climate following the fall of the New Order in May 1998, any attempt by Cinema 21 to deny local films screen time could be construed as a betrayal of *reformasi* and be damaging to their image. In fact, the Cinema 21 Group (via its subsidiary PT Camila Internusa Film) even funded *Pasir Berbisik* (*Whispering Sands*, Nan Achnas, 2000) in a sign of the company's support of new creative efforts. *Kuldesak* also attracted a significant audience and it was now in the Cinema 21 Group's commercial interests to screen Indonesian films if they could attract similar numbers. In turn, this was beneficial to local filmmakers because of Cinema 21's split-income system. Once taxes are taken out, income from tickets are split fifty-fifty between Cinema 21 and the film producer. This had been introduced by Cinema 21 as part of their relationship with MPAA studios and was now extended to local productions. With cinema tickets at Cinema 21 costing an average

10. Dialogue quoted from the English subtitles of *Kuldesak*.
11. J. B. Kristanto, *Nonton Film Nonton Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2004), 179.
12. Leila S. Chudori, "They Are the New Kids on the Block," *Tempo*, December 7, 1998, 86.

SEMINAR HARI FILM NASIONAL
"Perfilman Indonesia Dimata Sineas Muda"
Jakarta, 27 Maret 2002
FAKULTAS FILM & TELEVISI (IKJ) — KEMENTERIAN KEBUDAYAAN DAN PARIWISATA

Figure 2.3: Mira Lesmana (*left*), Riri Riza (*center*), and Shanty Harmayn (*right*) speak in 2002 at a seminar titled "Indonesian Cinema in the Eyes of Young Cineastes." Photograph courtesy of Hadi Artomo.

of IDR 20,000 to IDR 30,000 (USD 2 to USD 3) in Jakarta and other big cities,[13] filmmakers could more easily project their potential box-office income, and now had a clear financial incentive to attract as wide an audience as possible.

Despite the breakthrough success of *Kuldesak*, Indonesian films still faced challenges in the eyes of mainstream audiences due to their association with the predominantly adult content produced during the 1990s. Soon after *Kuldesak*, Lesmana and Riza began working on their follow-up production. Lesmana was acutely aware of how Indonesian films were perceived by the public and the uphill task they faced in trying to convince audiences to return to the cinema. She and director Riza reasoned that the obvious thing to do was to make a children's film because they knew that children did not have these previously held biases:

> They have no idea what went on with *Langitku Rumahku* or *filem esek-esek*. They have no history. So, I thought we should make a children's film. That was actually the idea of making [*Petualangan*] *Sherina*.[14]

Petualangan Sherina (*Sherina's Adventure*, Riri Riza, 2000) was supported by music and advertising businessman Triawan Munaf,[15] who wanted the film to launch the

13. Prices in 2018 are IDR 40,000 to IDR 50,000.
14. Mira Lesmana, personal interview, January 30, 2009.
15. As of January 2015, he is the head of the Creative Economy Board (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif).

singing career of his daughter Sherina Munaf. As a commercial proposition, a children's film would also sell double the tickets given that a parent or guardian would accompany children to the cinema. Miles Films marketed the film to children and their parents through magazines and other channels, creating a buzz before the launch, and released a soundtrack to further capitalize on the film's popularity. Released in June 2000—less than two years after *Kuldesak*—*Petualangan Sherina* sold 1.4 million tickets, beating all expectations and doubling the long-standing box office record held by *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September*. Lesmana recalls seeing a banner outside the National Film Commission for a discussion on the film industry following the success of *Petualangan Sherina* that read: "Film Indonesia Sudah Bangkit!" (Indonesian Film Is Reborn!). However, it would take more than one successful film for the film industry to return to mainstream pop culture.

Digital and Indie Revolution

Across the world in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a revolution of sorts occurred in the creative fields of video and media production. That revolution was attributable to the development and widespread availability of cheap digital equipment for production, editing, and exhibition. It encouraged new forms of filmmaking by democratizing access to filmmaking technology, reducing the costs of editing, making content sharing easier, and allowing more people to make creative media products. It gave birth to new indie film movements globally who were breaking free from existing regulatory constraints, modes of production, and thematic restrictions to make content not dictated by producers, governments, cinema owners, or the mainstream commercial market.[16] Established film industries were seen to limit access to outsiders, be antithetical to creativity and innovation, preferring to rely on established formulae and inflexible production methods. In Southeast Asia, notable digital and indie movements appeared in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia.[17]

New forms of film production would operate in a media environment newly liberated from thirty-two years of authoritarian rule. The number of print publications multiplied dramatically during *reformasi*, accompanied by new forms of literature, fashion, and media-making, allowing people to speak more freely in ways not possible before. At the same time, global shifts in the media landscape that Henry Jenkins has termed "convergence culture" saw the divisions between old and new media breakdown as new forms of participatory culture give rise to new modes

16. May A. Ingawanij and Benjamin McKay, eds., *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, NY: SEAP, 2011).
17. In Malaysia for example, Da Huang Pictures established in 2004 were at the forefront of an indie movement with filmmakers James Lee, Amir Muhammad and Tan Chui Mui developing alternative narratives and finding success at international film festivals. Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Just-Do-It-(Yourself): Independent Filmmaking in Malaysia," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 2007): 227–47.

of consumption and consumer behavior.[18] As Brent Luvaas shows, much of this cultural production was DIY or do-it-yourself in orientation, driven by communities and individuals dedicated to an impulse of "creating by any means necessary."[19] Juliastuti notes that after 1998, much of the political hunger and activism was replaced by market orientated consumption and identity expression.[20] Without dismissing consumption as vacuous, it's important to remember that all this cultural production needed new consumers hungry for these new forms of expression, searching for ways to build their own identities as youth of the post-Suharto generation. These young people became consumers of the new culture products being made, and would become the audiences of the reforming film industry.

In Indonesia, digital technology was similarly crucial to creative productivity in the years following 1998, becoming the technological backbone of the new indie film movement. For emerging filmmakers such as IKJ graduate Harry "Dagoe" Suharyadi (who had acted in *Kuldesak*), Indonesian indie cinema represented a new creative and expressive impulse:

> Whilst here there is definitely no big industry, so their independence is more a form of resistance against the rules that shackle creativity, rules that have different interests than the interests of filmmakers. Rebellion against these rules that inhibit the creative process: that is the basic characteristic of the independent cinema movement.[21]

Many filmmakers consciously adopted the indie label to assert their creative autonomy and self-reliance resulting in a flurry of creative output.[22] Requiring more time and dedication, indie feature films would take longer to appear, but short films were able to flourish with film scholar Gatot Prakosa recording over 1600 titles made between 2002 and 2004 alone.[23] Feature filmmaking was much slower in gestation given that the long form requires a different set of technical and storytelling skills, cost considerations, and image quality for exhibition, such that in the five years from 1998 to 2003 only forty feature-length films were made.

Alongside the *Kuldesak* filmmakers, a new generation of Indonesian filmmakers emerged who were young, energetic, indie-minded, and willing to reinvent the

18. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2008).
19. Luvaas, *DIY Style Fashion*, 2.
20. Juliastuti, "Whatever I Want."
21. "Sedang di sini kan jelas-jelas nggak ada industri besar. Jadi independennya lebih ke perlawanan terhadap aturan-aturan yang selama ini membelenggu kreativitas, aturan yang punya kepentingan berbeda dari kepentingan pembuat film. Pemberontakan terhadap aturan yang menghambat proses kreatif inilah karakteristik dasar gerakan sinema independen." Quoted in Taufik Andrie, "Air Mata Surga; Gerakan film independen Indonesia memadukan seni, teknik, dan mimpi," *Film Alternatif*, 2007. http://www.filmalternatif.org/?m=article.detail&id=27.
22. Alex Sihar, "Kemajemukan Karya Sinema Indonesia: Sebuah Cita-cita?," *Konfiden*, 2001. http://videotek.konfiden.or.id/pages/makalah03.php.
23. Gotot Prakosa, *Film Pendek Independen Dalam Penilaian: Sebuah Catatan dari Berbagai Festival 'Film Pendek dan Film Alternatif' di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Komitie Film Dewan Kesenian Jakarta; Yayasan Seni Visual Indonesia, 2005).

filmmaking process. Many of them had little to no experience in film production or even formal training; some attended film school either at IKJ or overseas; others had experience working in music video, television and advertising in the 1990s. Of these, one of the most prolific and iconic directors was Rudi Soedjarwo. Soedjarwo had returned from studying in the USA and started work at Multivision Plus, one of the big television production companies. Finding it impossible to work within the constraints of a large commercial production house, Soedjarwo left and with his friend Rako Prijanto made urban dramas *Bintang Jatuh* (*Falling Star*, 2000) and *Tragedi* (*Tragedy*, 2000) quickly and cheaply. Suharyadi, who had been in Japan on a scholarship, returned with a feature film called *Pachinko and Everybody's Happy* (2000). Director Indra Yudhistira returned from film school in Canada and made *Jakarta Project* (2000), inspired by Soedjarwo's *Bintang Jatuh*.[24] Their filmmaking was experimental and rough, but mobile, exciting, and fast, with a growing desire to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Others transitioned from advertising, music video, and television into feature film. Richard Buntario, from Broadcast Design Indonesia, made *5 Sehat 4 Sempurna (9 Sahabat 1 Taruhan)* (*5 Health*, *4 Perfections*, *9 Friends*, *1 Bet*, 2002) and *Cinta 24 Karat* (*24 Carat Love*, 2003). IKJ graduate and music video director Aria Kusumadewa made *Beth* (2000) and *Novel tanpa Huruf R* (*A Novel Without the Letter R*, 2003) with actress and producer Lola Amaria.[25] Television director Enison Sinaro directed *Sebuah Pertanyaan Untuk Cinta* (*A Question For Love*, 2000). Hanung Bramantyo for example graduated from IKJ in 1998 with the short film *Tlutur* (1998), before making the television film *Gelas-gelas Berdenting* (*Tinkling Glass*, 2001), and transitioning into feature film with his first cinematic release *Brownies* in 2004. Not all stayed with the feature film format, but continued to work across formats wherever work and opportunity were available.

Kuldesak director Mantovani took a different path when he teamed up with music video colleague Jose Poernomo to make the breakthrough horror film *Jelangkung* (2001). *Jelangkung* had been made as a TV movie for newly-established broadcaster TransTV, but when journalist-turned-producer Erwin Arnada from video production company Rexinema came on board, he advocated for the film to be released in cinemas. Costing only 400 million rupiah (USD 40,000) to make, *Jelangkung* became the first film to be screened digitally in Cinema 21 theaters. At first this was only on a single screen in Pondok Indah, South Jakarta but when the film became a hit with audiences who queued hours for tickets, the producers could afford the transfer to celluloid and in total the film was seen by 750,000 people in greater Jakarta alone and 1.5 million nationally. *Jelangkung* inspired a genre revival,

24. The producers were Christantiowati (journalist and author), Indra Yudhistira, Ronny P. Tjandra (later head of Jive Entertainment, the DVD production arm of Blitz Megaplex), Nurliswandi Piliang (journalist and writer), and Yusuf AS Muhammad. "Keberhasilan Bintang Jatuh membuat terpacu untuk melakukan hal yang sama." "Sinema Indonesia Baru: Menggeliat Setelah Mati Suri," *Tempo*, May 21, 2001.
25. For a further discussion of Aria Kusumadewa, see Bayu Dwi, "Independent Filmmakers Express Themselves," *The Jakarta Post*, March 11, 2001.

and other horror films followed including *Tusuk Jelangkung* (Dimas Djayadiningrat, 2003), *The Soul* (Nayato Fio Nuala, 2003), and *Bangsal 13* (*Ward 13*, Ody Harahap, 2004). These are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

Another genre that has been prominent in Indonesia's cinema revival is teen romances of which *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (*What's Up With Love?*, Rudi Soedjarwo, 2002) is the most well-known. *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* combined the marketing skills of Miles Films' Lesmana and Riza with the pop sensibilities of Rudi Soedjarwo and Rako Prijanto. Prominent music composer Melly Goeslaw provided the iconic pop soundtrack which itself became a bestseller, proving film's growing integration with other pop culture formats in Indonesia. Not only did the film speak in the language of teenagers, using slang and Jakartan dialect, it also concluded with the lead couple kissing in an airport, in a scene that captured the spirit of the youth and their refusal to abide by the old standards of morality.[26] Subsequent romance films further explore coming-of-age themes including "true love" and its complications, and negotiating between love, sexuality and other social obligations such as friends and family.[27] Significant titles included *Andai Ia Tahu* (*If He/She Knows*, Indra Yudhistira, 2002), *Arisan!* (*The Gathering*, Nia Dinata, 2003), *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love* (Nasri Cheppy, 2003), and *Brownies* (Hanung Bramantyo, 2004).

Despite a handful of successful titles, film production was still ad hoc and Indonesian filmmakers were still fighting against the perception that Indonesian films were as a rule not worth watching. According to Sinaro, in the years after 1998 a new generation of young Indonesians born in the late 1980s and 1990s encountered local films and were a potential new audience:

> They have never watched an Indonesian film. Ten years later [early 2000s] there are Indonesian films again, and they are interested, not because they are good necessarily. They want to know. So, they go and watch them with their friends.[28]

If consumption was driven by curiosity rather than habit, local films had not yet become a staple of people's consumption diets. Simply put, this kind of curiosity could not sustain a pop culture industry. Despite the lack of audience recognition and commercial flops, young Indonesians kept on making films.

While this productivity may have seemed ad hoc and driven by a mood of euphoria and experimentation, filmmakers were learning how to make films that spoke to their audience. In part, they were competing against audience expectations

26. David Hanan, "Changing Social Formations in Indonesian and Thai Teen Movies," in *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-authoritarian Politics*, ed. Ariel Heryanto (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 54–69.
27. Maimunah, "Indonesian Queer and the Centrality of Heteronormative Family," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 114–34. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.114_1.
28. "Nggak pernah nonton film Indonesia. Sepuluh tahun kemudian ada film Indonesia, pengen tahu, bukan karena bagus. Mau tahu. Lalu nonton rame-rame dengan temannya." Enison Sinaro, personal interview, August 15, 2008.

which had been shaped by watching films made in Hollywood and other more mature film markets. Director and scriptwriter Monty Tiwa told me that in

> [t]he first two years, from 1999, we were scorned by our audience. 'Watching Indonesians films is totally naff!' Although, little did our audience know, we are in the process of learning ourselves, trial and error. We are doing stuff, we're trying new stuff, we are finding out every day what works and what doesn't work.[29]

Tiwa describes a film he wrote, *Biarkan Bintang Menari* (*Let the Stars Dance*, Indra Yudhistira, 2003), as "the perfect example of the high standard in our head but the minimum capacity and capability of doing it."[30] *Biarkan Bintang Menari* flopped at the box-office but it was an important learning experience. Rather than using film as a means of self-expression or self-indulgence, filmmakers were figuring how to appeal to mainstream audiences by learning how to connect with them and by understanding how to entertain them.

Without massive advertising budgets or significant star power, young filmmakers only had their films with which to connect to audiences. This presented a Catch-22 situation because convincing skeptical audiences that Indonesian films were worth watching required audiences to watch Indonesian films. Over time, this would happen. Young Indonesian audiences were hungry for local content, and not always finding it on commercial television, they turned to the cinema and to Indonesian titles released on VCD and later DVD, where young filmmakers were experimenting with different ideas. Fajar Nugross explained in the Production Notes to his debut film *Dilarang Mencium di Malam Minggu* (*Forbidden to Kiss on Saturday Night*, 2003) that he was not only putting things he liked in the film, but also using it to express a typical frustration he experienced while dating.[31] Local audiences soon appreciated that locally made films were telling stories relevant to them, articulating their concerns, dreams, and aspirations. This did not happen overnight, but increasingly film would be normalized within pop culture in Indonesia.

Getting to the point where local feature film was an integral part of the local pop culture diet took time, and it was not until 2004 that this occurred according to Nugroho,[32] by which point annual production had reached twenty-five titles. However, indie productions by themselves cannot sustain a pop culture industry. Instead, they would need to develop sustainable models of production. For this they would have to sacrifice some of the independence and autonomy they had developed in the indie years of *reformasi*.

29. Original reads: "The first two years, dari '99. Kita dicacimaki sama penonton kita. 'Menonton film Indonesia ah man norak!' Padahal, little did our audience know, we are in the process of learning ourselves, trial and error. We are doing stuff. We're trying new stuff. We are finding out every day what works and what doesn't work." Monty Tiwa, personal interview, September 26, 2008.
30. Monty Tiwa, personal interview, September 26, 2008.
31. Text available at: http://filmmarket.blogspot.my/2007/08/dilarang-mencium-di-malam-minggu.html
32. Garin Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2005), 104–8.

Funding Production

A perennial problem for filmmakers the world over is the availability of funding and the compromises, politics, or restrictions that come with accessing it. Indie-minded filmmakers have to contend with the fact that their desire for autonomy and creative control limits who will give them money and the amount they will give. Rudi Soedjarwo self-funded his first film *Bintang Jatuh* for only nine million rupiah (approx. USD 1,200) but typically as filmmakers gain experience their ideas get more ambitious and budget demands increase. An average feature film in Indonesia will cost between one to five billion rupiah to make (about USD 100,000 to USD 500,000), an amount most aspiring filmmakers do not have. A number of funding options are available including self-funding, private investment, or working with production companies (either one of the new companies that emerged after 1998 or with the old production companies). Young filmmakers had little access to the old production companies (Rapi Films, Soraya Intercine, Starvision, Multivision Plus, and Indika) because they had few networks or contacts in the established media industry. Besides, these companies represented all that was wrong with the industry and young filmmakers did not want to be associated with them and their legacies. Young filmmakers looked for new sources of capital that would suit their spirit of independence and creative autonomy.

Luckily, new investors were attracted to film following the success of *Petualangan Sherina* (2000), *Jelangkung* (2001), and in particular *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (2002). Outsiders saw how popular local films were becoming for local audiences and saw film as a trendy investment with potential for quick profit and media attention. New producer Shanty Harmayn of Salto Films identified this group of new investors as "Venture Capitalists, bankers, a variety of business people."[33] Director Achnas says:

> There are a lot of people with extra money lying around: stock investors, brokers and then conglomerates. Right now there's a lot of money going around if you want to make a film that you care to fill it with a political party. There's a lot of money. Golkar [Political Party] wants to make a film. [Promote] Golkar and you can get 5 miliar [5 billion rupiah] very easily.[34]

Leveraging this attraction film had for private investors, many young filmmakers utilized this as a way into feature filmmaking. Awi Suryadi and his friend actor Thomas Nawilis returned from studying in the USA in the early 2000s, wanting to make a feature film together. Despite having no formal filmmaking education or experience, they sourced money from friends and acquaintances to make *Gue Kapok Jatuh Cinta* (*I Give Up Trying to Fall in Love*, 2006). Asked why they were willing to fund him, Suryadi replied "Because they also like film, they believe in

33. "Venture Capitalists, Banker, beragam pelaku bisnislah." Quoted in Prima Rusdi, ed., *Bikin Film, Kata 40 Pekerja Film!* (Jakarta: Penerbit Majalah Bobo, 2007), 18.
34. Nan Achnas, personal interview, September 13, 2008.

the story too. That's all. Why not? So they gave it a go."[35] *Gue Kapok Jatuh Cinta* enabled Suryadi to show he was a competent scriptwriter and director, allowing him to attracting funding for future projects.

For filmmakers able to afford it, self-funding allowed some to make their first feature film and hone their skills before attracting external money. For veteran writer Hilman Hariwijaya—famous for writing the *Lupus* series of books in the 1980s—self-funding enabled him to make his debut film *The Wall* in 2007 with his wife, TV actress Nessa Sadin. Despite twenty years' experience writing for film and television, Hariwijaya decided to use his own money for his first feature. The fact that the film performed poorly with audiences and lost money was not a concern for Hariwijaya: *The Wall*, he said, was his way of learning *how* to make a film.[36] With this experience and *The Wall* as part of their portfolio, their company Lupus Entertainment was able to secure funding for further projects, such as *Anak Ajaib* (*Magical Child*, Tjandra Warasto, 2009), a children's film wholly funded by vitamin company Curcuma Plus. Hariwijaya has since written numerous film and television scripts, many under his pseudonym Hilman Mutasi such as *Angkerbatu* (*Eerie Rock*, Jose Poernomo, 2007), *Si Jago Merah* (*Great Red*, Iqbal Rais, 2008), *The Tarix Jabrix* (Iqbal Rais, 2008), and *Janda Kembang* (*Virgin Widow*, Lakonde, 2009).

Independent production companies such as Miles Films, Salto Films (Shanty Harmayn), and Kalyana Shira (Nia Dinata) have all received private investment from a range of sources, both domestic and international. Dinata self-funded her first feature *Ca-bau-kan* (*The Courtesan*, 2002) and has since become a prominent independent producer. Kalyana Shira have a foundation which handles the day-to-day operations of the company, with substantial funding from The Ford Foundation, a US-based philanthropic organization. Kalyana Shira also source production capital from overseas, catering their products to foreign markets with films about polygamy like *Berbagi Suami* (*Love for Share*, 2006), women's issues like *Perempuan Punya Cerita* (*Chants of Lotus*, Nia Dinata, Lasja F Susatyo, Fatimah T Rony, and Upi, 2007), as well as more commercial films such as comedies *Arisan!* (*The Gathering*, Nia Dinata, 2003) and *Quickie Express* (Dimas Djayadiningrat, 2007). Miles Films have worked with the Mizan Group, an Islamic publishing company, for some projects including *Laskar Pelangi* (*Rainbow Troops*, Riri Riza, 2008) and *Sang Pemimpi* (*The Dreamer*, Riri Riza, 2009). For *Atambua 39° Celcius* (Riri Riza, 2012) they relied on Indonesian crowdfunding website wujudkan.com. Other filmmakers have applied to foreign funding bodies such as Hubert Bals Fund (International Film Festival Rotterdam), or the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF).

Content producers and production companies from other media sectors also moved into film production including music video and advertising company Rexinema, television stations TransTV and SCTV, and content providers for

35. "Karena mereka juga suka film, they believe in the story juga, ya udahlah. Why not gitu. Jadi coba-coba deh gitu." Personal interview, Awi Suryadi, June 6, 2008.
36. Hilman Hariwijaya, personal interview, June 4, 2008.

television such as MNC and Prima Entertainment (subsequently known as Sinemart). They tended to see feature film as a logical expansion of their content business in a sector not dominated by established companies. The most aggressive of these new production companies is Maxima Pictures, established in 2005 by Freddy Lingga and Chandra Lie, the owners of Sriwijaya Airlines (one of Indonesia's largest airline companies).[37] Day-to-day operations are managed by Yoen K, a former marketing manager with Lion Air, who has sought to bring marketing and branding principles to the company.[38] When they began producing in 2006–2007, they released four films, three with director Nayato Fio Nuala including *Cinta Pertama* (*First Love*, 2006), *Lewat Tengah Malam* (*Past Midnight*, 2007), and *The Butterfly* (2007), and one with Lasya Susantyo called *Bukan Bintang Biasa* (*Not an Ordinary Star*, 2007). Similar companies include Legacy Pictures, Falcon Pictures, and Oreima Films. Filmmakers tend to like these new companies because they are ambitious, dynamic, and willing to take risks.

Without establishing a production company per se, one alternative approach towards rationalization of the film funding process was engineered by Adiyanto Sumarjono who set up Investasi Film Indonesia (IFI, Indonesian Film Investment) in 2005. IFI acts as the front company for a group of private backers to invest in film, thus reducing their individual risk by combining the contribution of multiple investors. Sumarjono says that IFI was formed by a group of his wealthy friends with "spare change" who wanted to invest in film.[39] Sumarjono is himself a young lawyer working for a large multinational law firm. By 2008, IFI had funded five feature films, including *Garasi* (*Garage*, Agung Sentausa, 2006) in cooperation with Miles Films, *Alexandria* (Ody C. Harahap, 2005) in cooperation with Rexinema, *Coklat Stroberi* (*Chocolate Strawberry*, Ardy Octaviand, 2007), *Coblos Cinta* (*Vote for Love*, Findo Purwono, 2008), and *Radit & Jani* (Upi Avianto, 2008). IFI simplifies the process for both filmmakers and private investors by acting as a middleman.

Other films have been funded from unlikely and even contentious sources. The Jakarta Police funded *The Police* (A Leung Wong, 2009) and the horror film *Enam* (*Six*, Stephen Odang, 2008) was rumored to have been funded with the proceeds of corruption. Film production has also attracted some of the richest men in Indonesia, including aspiring film director Henry Riady, son of billionaire James Riady of the LIPPO Group, who made *Sepuluh* (*Ten*, Henry Riady, 2008) at a cost of twelve billion rupiah (USD 1.2 million). Tycoon Hashim Djojohadikusumo, brother of 2014 presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto, funded the Merdeka Trilogy of nationalist war films: *Merah Putih* (*Red and White*, Yadi Sugandi, 2009), *Darah Garuda* (*Blood of Eagles*, Yadi Sugandi and Conor Allyn, 2010), and *Hati Merdeka* (*Heart of Freedom*,

37. According to *GlobeAsia*, in 2016 Chandra Lie and his brother Hendry Lie were worth about USD 325 million and ranked 105th on Indonesia's wealth list. See "150 Richest Indonesians," *GlobeAsia*, July 1, 2016. http://www.globeasia.com/cover-story/150-richest-indonesians/.
38. Yoen K, Personal interview, July 18, 2008.
39. Ferdiansyah, "Obat Kuat untuk Film Indonesia," *Behind the Screen*, 2005, 34–35.

CLAS MOVIE
STARVISION PRESENTS
Get Married
A FILM BY HANUNG BRAMANTYO
NIRINA ZUBIR
RINGGO AGUS RAHMAN
AMING
DESTA 'CLUBEIGHTIES'
RICHARD KEVIN
STARVISION PRESENTS GET MARRIED A FILM BY HANUNG BRAMANTYO
NIRINA ZUBIR RINGGO AGUS RAHMAN AMING DESTA 'CLUBEIGHTIES' RICHARD KEVIN
MERIAM BELLINA JAJA MIHARDJA IRA WIBOWO INGRID WIJANARKO IGA NAWARA
FILM EDITOR CESA DAVID LUCKMANSYAH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FAOZAN RIZAL SCREENPLAY MUSFAR YASIN CASTING DIRECTOR AMELYA OKTAVIA DINDA BELLINDA
SOUND DESIGNER ADITYAWAN SUSANTO ADIMOLANA ART DIRECTOR ALLAN SEBASTIAN MUSIC DIRECTOR SLANK MAKE UP & COSTUME RETNO R DAMAYANTI
PHOTOGRAPHER ERIK WIRASAKTI LINE PRODUCER TIKA ANGELA SANDY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FIAZ SERVIA BUSTAL NAWAWI
PRODUCED BY CHAND PARWEZ SERVIA DIRECTED BY HANUNG BRAMANTYO
SAKSIKAN DI BIOSKOP MULAI 11 OKTOBER 2007
www.starvisionplus.com

Figure 2.4: A promotional poster for romantic-comedy *Get Married* (Hanung Bramantyo, 2007) features a prominent logo for cigarette brand Clas Mild. Image courtesy of Starvision Production 2007.

Yadi Sugandi and Conor Allyn, 2011). The booming film industry also attracted commercial sponsorship in the form of branding and product placement, making it possible to fund an entire film this way.[40] Yet such arrangements have not always produced commercial success such as *D'Girlz Begins* (Tengku Firmansyah, 2006) sponsored by feminine hygiene product manufacturer Softex, and *Liburan Seruuu . . . !!* (*Exciting Holiday*, Sofyan D Surza, 2008) a children's film funded by powdered milk brand Dancow. In the case of *D'Girlz Begins*, the film was to be the culmination of a television competition to find three female actors as brand representatives, but the film was a disaster. As producer Erwin Arnada noted however, after the industry stabilized in 2004, corporate sponsorship was less in the form of cash.[41] Instead, companies preferred to supply products or services, do product placement, or pay for co-branded advertising, such as the ubiquitous billboards in Jakarta and other cities, often paid for by cigarette companies.

For young creatives wanting to get into filmmaking, new production companies and private investors represented their best chance of finding the substantial capital required to make their first or second feature film. Selling film projects to outsiders was made easier by the fact that there was excitement around the film industry and prior popular hits acted as an indicator of possible commercial success. By using private investors, young filmmakers were able to maintain a significant degree of creative control over their productions, often by pitching their ideas to potential investors who were young and adventurous like themselves but who lacked much experience in film production. As Elvin Kustaman, a producer with Credo Pictures, says of his private backers: "[they are] not known in the film industry, they are just normal people who have other business, they are interested in doing movie but they don't want to be involved in the process of making the movie."[42] Through 2006, a range of new production companies appeared, many producing just one film, contributing to a diversity of productions and speaking to the openness of the film production economy in the years after 1998.

Whilst satisfying their desire to be indie, autonomous, and DIY, over time more filmmakers began to realize that the practicalities of private and external sources of funding came with their own problems. Speaking from the creative side, Rudi Soedjarwo, who has dealt with many potential investors, outlines the problems he encountered:

> The problem is sometimes tricky. There might be interests so we have to see eye-to-eye from the outset. Some give their money but their child acts. Some give their money but there is politics involved. Some give money but to sell their product. Some give their money at the outset because they are happy but halfway they change their mind. Now that is dangerous.[43]

40. Erwin Arnada, personal interview, June 16, 2008.
41. Personal interview, June 16, 2008.
42. Personal interview, Elvin Kustaman, July 19, 2008.
43. Rudi Soedjarwo, personal interview, July 19, 2008. "Tapi masalahnya kadang tricky ya ada

Even Investasi Film Indonesia turned out to be less than ideal for Lesmana when her film *Garasi* (2006) did not perform to the investors' expectations.[44] She suddenly found herself having to answer to her previously anonymous investors.[45] She had no idea what the investors had been told, and felt uncomfortable having to explain herself to a group of investors who knew little about the realities of the film industry. After that experience, she has chosen not to work with IFI. Although IFI seemed to facilitate funding, allowing filmmakers to focus on the creative side, IFI's management of private capital presented its own problems. It is IFI's policy to keep the identities of IFI's investors secret, which means that filmmakers do not know who is really funding their films.

Investor disappointment began to impact their willingness to fund films as the promise of fame and/or spectacular profits did not materialize as they had expected. Investors discovered that film production is not as glamorous as it appears. As Achnas says:

> Private investors, now there's a lot of people with money and they just want to try to invest. They are the one off. And then once it's successful they will invest again. But there are more stories of where they are just burnt from the experience in investing films and they don't want to do anything about it.[46]

As producer Leo Sutanto of Sinemart points out "[a]ll of a sudden there are new production houses (PH), I am not saying that those who produce are those who do not understand film. I am worried that they think it is easy and pleasurable."[47] A producer with Indika, Shanker RS, believes that young filmmakers do not understand the business of film, and have very different interests to those who invest money into film projects. Of young filmmakers, he says:

> It's their obsession. But what they do is use other people's money, they make their obsession. As long as they are happy, they are contented, they love the movie. They don't care, they don't worry about the investment. When you use money, borrow money to make films, what do you have to think? How to sell the movie—people forget that.[48]

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kepentingan-kepentingan kita harus satu suara dulu lah. Ada yang taruh duit tapi anaknya maen, ada yang naruh duit tapi ada politicalnya, ada yang taruh duit tapi jualan produk dia. Ada yang taruh duit pas awalnya karena seneng tapi sampai tengah tiba-tiba berubah nah itu bahaya."

44. Personal interview, January 30, 2009.
45. In a recent interview with IFI investor Madiyan Sahdianto, he notes that IFI has around twenty investors. Many of the initial investors withdrew following the commercial failures of their early films. See "Madiyan Sahdianto," IFI, December 7, 2009, http://www.ifi.co.id/id/corporate/interview/86-madiyan.html. One of the listed producers for *Banyu Biru* (*Blue Water*, Teddy Soeriaatmadja, 2004) is Kartadjaja Intan, Director of Investment Banking at the large European bank BNP Paribas.
46. Personal interview, September 13, 2008.
47. Original reads: "Karena dengan tiba-tiba bermunculan production house (PH) baru, saya tidak bilang bahwa yang sekarang banyak bikin itu adalah orang-orang yang tidak mengerti film. Saya khawatir karena mereka lebih tertarik pada mudah dan enaknya." "Gairah Perfilman Bakal Kendur?" *Behind the Screen*, July, 2005, 12–13.
48. Personal interview, August 22, 2008.

Young filmmakers were initially thrilled with the plethora of funding options available to them from private investors, new production companies, television stations, corporate sponsors, overseas funding bodies, and consortiums such as IFI. What they began to realize, however, was that these sources were not always reliable or stable, and often could not be used again. Clearly the young post-1998 film industry was still working out how to balance commercial interests (profit) with creative interests (autonomy and self-expression).

Filmmakers adopted a number of strategies to try and manage this problem of expectations. Rudi Soedjarwo responded by making cheaper films:

> Actually, there are a lot of potential investors. There are also lots of people with lots of money and they know that film is promising. But they are not in film, so they are hesitant to even part with 100 million because they are not in the field. That's why I make films that are not expensive. This is to assure them that the risk is small. From the outset we have to be careful otherwise they might leave. Lots of investors have just left.[49]

If lower budgets were not an option, and if investment was becoming harder to find and secure, filmmakers found they were spending more time chasing capital than they did making films. This meant they produced fewer films than they wanted. They needed other ways of securing the necessary funding for their productions. Given the hassles of dealing with private investors, many filmmakers reassessed the value of private investment. Critically, it became apparent that private investment was unsuited to the continued production of films, as many investors were only one-offs or easily disappointed when the realities of film did not match their expectations. Young filmmakers needed a new and stable source of production capital if they were to continue making films on a sustainable basis. For this, they would need to compromise on the autonomy they valued as indie filmmakers.

Return of the Old Producers

> The young generation who were trying to revive local film, in inverted commas 'local films of high quality' have been somewhat pushed aside by them [big companies]. Why pushed aside? Because in a year these people in the middle, they can only at most make one film because they do not have the capital.[50]
>
> —Rako Prijanto

A survey of feature films made in Indonesia between 1998 and 2003 shows an overwhelming majority were made by new and independent filmmakers and

49. Personal interview, July 19, 2008.
50. "Generasi muda yang tadinya mencoba untuk membangkitkan film nasional itu. Dalam tanda kutip 'film nasional bermutu secara kualitas' itu agak tergeser dengan mereka. Kenapa tergeser? Karena dalam satu tahun orang-orang ini yang di tengah ini, mereka hanya bisa bikin film paling satu karena mereka tidak punya kapital." Rako Prijanto, personal interview, August 11, 2008.

companies. Film producers and production companies that had made films during the New Order and switched to television in the 1990s continued producing for television. The number of broadcasters doubled in the years after 1998, requiring even more local content. But had the effect of increasing competition in the television sector, with ratings-driven programming leading to high turnover, and a reduction in profit margins. Content providers were further squeezed by the delays in payments from television stations.

When these old producers attempted to return to producing films, they struggled to adapt to the new conditions. Rapi Films made *Joshua Oh Joshua* (Eduart P Sirait, 2000) in an attempt to emulate the success of the children's film *Petualangan Sherina* (2000). Despite the presence of child star Joshua Suherman, the film only attracted an audience of fifty thousand, compared to *Petualangan Sherina*'s 1.4 million. Starvision released two horror films, similarly citing *Petualangan Sherina* as having introduced a new spirit into the industry. Both of their films—*Kafir* (*Satanic*, Mardali Syarief, 2002) and *Peti Mati* (*The Coffin*, Mardali Syarief, 2003)—performed poorly. Even *Telegram* (2002) by senior actor-director Slamet Rahardjo, partially funded by ARTCAM International (France), sold only 10,500 tickets. Old companies were still relying on old stories, old directors, old marketing techniques, and an old visual style.

Old film producers maintained a style of production they had developed as film producers during the New Order and which had proved successful in producing *sinetron* and other content for television in the 1990s.[51] When they funded "great directors" such as Wim Umboh or Teguh Karya, they gave them significant latitude, but for films aimed for a mass audience the producers were much more hands-on, shaping the films for what they believed were popular tastes. This production model had worked during the New Order for film, and since television attracted the traditional audiences of local films, there was significant thematic and stylistic continuity between feature films of the 1980s and television of the 1990s. When these producers returned to film after 1998, they employed the film directors they had worked with in the 1980s and 1990s and employed their old style of working. However, since the cinema audiences had also changed after 1998, "the language of their films no longer 'connects' with the contemporary audience."[52] Tastes of young cinema goers had been shaped by global pop culture and they expected more from the cinema, especially since they were paying for tickets. For these old producers, enriched through television, capital was not a problem but rather one of creativity: they did not know how to make films that connected with contemporary audiences.

The breakthrough came in 2003 when producer Ram Soraya of Soraya Intercine produced *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love* (2003) which set a new box-office record of three million tickets. Jakartan teenager Rachmania Arunita had written a coming-of-age

51. Sen and Hill, *Media, Culture and Politics*, 137.
52. Original reads: "Bahasa film mereka tidak 'nyambung' lagi dengan penonton masa kini." J. B. Kristanto, *Katalog Film Indonesia 1926–2007* (Jakarta: Nalar, 2007), xxv.

teen romance novel called *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love* in 2000 and distributed it amongst her friends as photocopies.[53] It was so much in demand that the book was picked up by publishers and became a hugely popular novel selling over fifty-thousand copies. Soraya Intercine bought the rights to the book and employed Arunita as a scriptwriter. To direct, Soraya Intercine hired Nasri Cheppy, famous for directing the popular *Si Boy* series of films in the 1980s. *Eiffel* is told from the perspective of the female protagonist Tita (Shandy Aulia) who slowly falls in love with Adit (Samuel Rizal), a friend of the family who she initially finds abrasive and cold. Adit has loved Tita from when they first met, but he cannot express his love until they meet by chance in Paris, and he confesses his love to her in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. The film thus plays into fantasies about teen romance seen from the perspective of a modern girl who overcomes parental control to snare the hunk, enhanced by the exotic setting in Paris.

Soraya Intercine had thus stumbled on the formula that would allow the old producers to transition back into profitable feature film production. Old companies needed to find young creative Indonesians such as Rachmania Arunita who were creating stories that connected with post-1998 audiences. These young writers and filmmakers knew the language of youth, were in tune with contemporary pop culture, and knew how to construct and visually present stories that spoke to contemporary audiences. As it turned out, the nascent film industry was full of young people struggling to make films with limited capital but with an abundance of energy, creativity, and cultural nuance. These young filmmakers were also searching for capital to sustain production as they found private and external sources too unpredictable and ad hoc. Conversely, big companies would come to realize that they had to employ these young filmmakers who had the creative capital appropriate to a contemporary audience. Opportunity would present itself for these two groups to begin to work together, precipitating the shifting balance between young filmmakers and the old producers.

Between 2002 and 2004, circumstances would move in favor of the old producers, marking a symbolic end of the indie moment. This was best encapsulated in the fate of the i-sinema movement which had begun in 1999 as a collective of young, indie minded filmmakers. I-sinema was founded by Dimas Djayadiningrat, Enison Sinaro, Ipang Wahid, Jay Subiyakto, Mira Lesmana, Nan T. Achnas, Richard Buntario, Riri Riza, Rizal Mantovani, Sentot Sahid, Srikaton, and Yao Fio Nuala (Nayato Fio Nuala) as a forum for young aspiring, independent filmmakers to support each other in making a feature film. As an affirmation of their indie principles, point five of their manifesto states: "To maintain independence in production and distribution."[54] With twelve members, the idea was to have a new Indonesian film in the cinema every month for a year. In total i-sinema realized only four feature

53. P. Hadriani, "Sukses Ini Datang Terlalu Cepat," *Koran Tempo*, January 11, 2004.
54. Tilman Baumgärtel, ed., *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 151.

films: *Eliana, Eliana* (Riri Riza, 2002); *Titik Hitam* (*Black Spot*, Sentot Sahid, 2002); *Bendera* (*Flag*, Nan Achnas, 2002); and *5 Sehat, 4 Sempurna* (*5 Health*, *4 Perfections*, Richard Buntario, 2002). After these releases in 2002, i-sinema struggled to sustain itself, ultimately leading to the group's dissolution.

I-sinema attracted Leo Sutanto, a producer with the new company Prima Entertainment (later to be called Sinemart), who had ambitions of becoming a big player in the film industry. Although Sutanto was a new producer, he had worked in the film business for a number of decades, first in the Cinema 21 Group and later in Indika, the production arm of Sudwikatmono's business empire. He left Indika in 1998 and joined Gunawan Sulaiman, a former SCTV executive, in a new production company, Prima Entertainment.[55] As a producer, Sutanto gained a reputation for spending big on actors and rapidly established Prima Entertainment as a reliable content provider for television. When the i-sinema group was looking for backers, Sutanto seized the opportunity, providing them with production capital in return for the television rights to their films.[56] In particular, he banked on the films coming from directors Jay Subiyakto and Rizal Mantovani and expected to get a good price for a twelve-film package with television stations.[57] When *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* proved a big hit in early 2002, Sutanto bought the rights to the spin-off television series from Miles Films. When Sutanto established Sinemart in 2003, Sentot Sahid joined him as a founding partner along with Heru Hendriarto and Lala Hamid (former program director at RCTI). Sutanto realized that this young generation represented the future of film production, and by working with them and offering them the capital they needed, he could use his business acumen and networks to create a new kind of partnership.

In 2003, when i-sinema had all but dissolved, film production transitioned into a new model of funding and production relationships. Some i-sinema members maintained their independence by managing their own companies or carefully choosing their backers. Others pursued a different path by partnering with the old film companies. As Prijanto put it:

> Each took their own path. There were those who maintained their idealism like Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza, Nan Achnas, Nia Dinata for example. There were also young generation who chose a different path with the big industry players. . . . At that time, we had lots of enthusiasm to make a film. . . . 'Indonesian films return again'. But what became our dilemma was that whilst we had plenty of enthusiasm [and] we had the manpower, we didn't have capital. We didn't have money. Now, that money we sought from the senior players in the industry at the time like Primavision [*sic*], Multivision and now there is Sinemart.[58]

55. SCTV was part-owned by Sudwikatmono.
56. He is listed in the credits of the i-sinema films, and in Sentot Said's *Titik Hitam* (*Black Dot*, 2002) Prima Entertainment is listed as the producer.
57. Suggested by Enison Sinaro, personal interview, August 15, 2008.
58. Original: "tapi ada jalan masing-masing. Ada yang tetap stay dengan idealis mereka seperti Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza, Nan Achnas, Nia Dinata gitu. Ada juga generasi muda yang memang mencari jalan lain dengan

Nayato Fio Nuala was one of the first i-sinema directors who chose to work with the big companies, making his debut feature film *The Soul* (2004) with Starvision (produced by Chand Parwez Servia). Educated in Taiwan, Nayato had returned to Indonesia in 1996 and directed advertisements and *sinetron* (soap opera) but was attracted to the idealism of other young directors at the time. Ultimately, though, he wanted balance and established his own tightknit creative team of twenty in Bogor, south of Jakarta.[59] He and his team have made over fifty films (many under pseudonyms, such as Ian Jacobs, Pingkan Utari, and Koya Pagayo, or with protégés such as Chiska Doppert) at a rate of about seven titles per year, almost all of them on contract for big production companies. He is now one of the most productive directors in the industry, and has earned the moniker "master of horror" for the numerous films he has directed in that genre.

On the creative side, director Rako Prijanto exemplifies why young creatives were willing to work with these established producers. Beginning alongside Rudi Soedjarwo, Prijanto established himself as a competent scriptwriter and sometime actor. In *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*, he was assistant director to Soedjarwo, and wrote the iconic poems that gave the film much of its romance and charm. Following *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?*, he worked on the spinoff *sinetron* with scriptwriter Jujur Prananto. His directing breakthrough came from Leo Sutanto, who gave him a huge seven-billion-rupiah budget for his debut film *Ungu Violet* (2005), almost double the budget for the original *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* film. Prijanto says:

> Then *Ungu Violet* became my first step. At the time I was at a loss. I am a nobody, I've never made a film, [I've] only ever helped others make films. I was only an assistant director. But Leo [Sutanto] gave me a big opportunity and I was given scope to work, as much freedom as possible to work on *Ungu Violet*.[60]

Prijanto was taken aback by such an offer, but freedom to make his own film was crucial for the young aspiring filmmaker. It also established the type of relationships between producer and director that have come to characterize the Indonesian film industry. Prijanto is now an established director, having made over a dozen films since *Ungu Violet*, working for both new independent companies such as Oriema Films and Falcon Pictures, and older companies such as Rapi Films, Multivision

industri-industri yang udah besar itu. . . . Waktu itu semangat kita tinggi untuk membikin sebuah filem. . . . Film Indonesia bangkit kembali. Tapi yang jadi kendala kita adalah, semangat kita tinggi, sumber daya manusia kita punya, tapi kita tidak punya capital. Kita nggak punya uang. Nah, uang ini kita cari dari pelaku-pelaku industri yang sudah senior waktu itu kaya Primavision, ada Multivision, sekarang ada Sinemart." Rako Prijanto, personal interview, August 11, 2008.

59. Adrian Jonathan Pasaribu and Arie Kartikasari, "Nayato Fio Nuala: Saya Buat Film Untuk Nonton Film," September 20, 2011. http://filmindonesia.or.id/article/nayato-fio-nuala-saya-buat-film-untuk-nonton-film.

60. "Nah *Ungu Violet* bisa menjadi langkah awal saya. Saya waktu itu bingung. Saya ini bukan siapa-siapa, saya belum pernah bikin film, cumin bantuin orang-orang bikin film. Saya cuma seorang asisten sutradara. Tapi Pak Leo memberi saya kesempatan yang begitu gedenya dan saya diberi keleluasaan untuk berkarya itu kebebasan untuk berkaya sebebas-bebasnya untuk Ungu Violet itu." Rako Prijanto, personal interview, August 11, 2008.

Plus, and Starvision. Without this initial opportunity from Sutanto, he may never have had the chance to direct.

This was to become the pattern as old producers transitioned back into feature filmmaking after having not made any significant movies for almost a decade. They quickly realized that in order to cater to contemporary audiences, they could not rely on old directors and old modes of storytelling. In fact, these old producers to some extent now believe that they are the ones driving the contemporary industry:

> So the way I give them chance to become director for film, [is] I give them the series, [or] the film television. If they are good, then I give them [the] chance to make movies [Chand Parwez Servia, Starvision].[61]

> The newcomers are actually disturbing the business actually. If they want to make film, they should work together with the . . . of course with the professional filmmakers. That's the right way. If you are a first timer, why do you want to take a chance? [Shanker RS, Indika][62]

The key was to employ a new generation of directors, as they were the ones with the savvy and creative capital to make films that connected with audiences. Young

Figure 2.5: Director Hanung Bramantyo (*left*) speaks at the press conference announcing the production of *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan 2* (*The Heaven Which Is Not Missed 2*, Hanung Bramantyo, 2017) in December 2016. To his left sits MD Pictures producer Manoj Punjabi. Photograph from Tempo / Nurdiansyah.

61. Personal interview, July 17, 2008.
62. Personal interview, August 22, 2008.

Figure 2.6: Director Joko Anwar (*third from the left*) sits to the left of producer Sunil Samtani and behind Gope Samtani at the press conference for *Pengabdi Setan* (*Satan's Slaves*, Joko Anwar, 2017). Photograph courtesy of Rapi Films.

directors who began working independently and have over time chosen to work with larger companies include Awi Suryadi, Monty Tiwa, Helfi Kardit, Hanny Saputra, Jose Poernomo, Ody Harahap, Upi Avianto, Toto Hoedi, Findo Poerwono, Lasya Fauzia Susatyo, Joko Anwar, and Hanung Bramantyo. While this may have marked the end of the post-*reformasi* phase of independence, the new model was central to the systematization of filmmaking after 2004. Without it, sustained levels of production would not have been possible.

A New Production Model

A majority of mainstream film production in Indonesia now relies on collaboration between old capital and new creativity. Old capital refers to the production companies that were producing films in the New Order who switched to television in the 1990s, and include Rapi Films, Multivision Plus, Indika, Starvision, Soraya Intercine, and more recently the two offshoots, MD Pictures and Sinemart. Other newer commercial producers who entered the industry after 1998 have similarly followed this model, and include Maxima Pictures, Falcon Pictures, Oreima Films, and BIC Productions. More independent producers remain, but with far less annual output including Kalyana Shira, Miles Films, Salto Films, and a host of smaller

companies. On the creative side, young filmmakers who honed their craft in the early 2000s and developed their own networks, teams, and production methods have settled into this new production model which allows them to maintain a certain amount of creative control and autonomy.

As a result, most films are now outsourced by big production companies to young filmmakers and their teams, who make films to order. Ideas for films may come from these young filmmakers themselves or can come from a producer, and are then developed by scriptwriters, before going into production. Director Ody Harahap describes it thus: "To work with a production house, we look for whatever connects: there's an idea [for a film, and there's] someone who wants to buy it."[63] Sometimes it takes as little as an SMS to offer an idea to a producer, and to be given the go-ahead.[64] The budget is negotiated, and production starts with the final cut delivered to the producer within one to two months. For both filmmakers and producers, this working relationship has its benefits, and suits the post-1998 film industry. Yet it is also a system that developed organically as a response to prevailing market conditions and within legacy structures. As a result, it is still fraught with problems, inconsistencies, and issues.

Given the issues associated with private and external investment discussed earlier, big production companies provide young filmmakers with a stable source of production capital. As experienced film producers, they already know the risks involved in filmmaking, and do not have unrealistic expectations about what a film can do commercially. Awi Suryadi, who describes himself as a "freelance director," explains his position:

> Because we don't have money ourselves at the moment, we prefer to contract ourselves to the big production companies. They are the ones who understand distribution, as well as marketing. We concentrate on the creative process. . . . I'm flexible; it depends on the PH [Production House]. If the PH wants to contract me to make a film, I can do that. If they want to hire me just as director, I can do that too.[65]

Outsourcing has allowed young directors to establish their own creative teams where they handle everything from concept and script development, hiring crews, shooting, and editing. Prominent teams of this kind include Hanung Bramantyo's Dapur Films, Rudi Soedjarwo's Reload Pictures, Monty Tiwa's Moviesta Pictures, with many seconding as informal film schools for young and emerging directors. Iqbal Rais, for example, left his hometown in Surabaya to work in Dapur Films, and

63. "Untuk kerja sama production house, kita cari yang connect saja, ada ide ada yang mau beli." Personal interview, October 28, 2008.

64. Rudi Soedjarwo, personal interview, July 19, 2008.

65. "Kita belum ada modal juga sekarang kita lagi lebih milih kita ngeborong aja deh dari PH-PH besar toh mereka emang udah ngerti distribusi, lebih ngerti marketing gitu kan, kita lebih ke proses kreatif. . . . Saya fleksibel, tergantung PHnya. Kalau PHnya mau ngeborong nih bikin film, ya saya juga bisa. Kalau cuma mau hire saya sebagai director juga bisa." Awi Suryadi, personal interview, June 6, 2008.

Figure 2.7: The Moviesta Pictures office as imagined in the film *Keramat* (*Sacred*, Monty Tiwa, 2009). Image courtesy of Starvision.

Figure 2.8: Hanung Bramantyo photographed outside his Dapur Film office in October 2007. Photograph from Tempo / Budi Yanto.

emerged as a productive director under Bramantyo's tutelage directing ten films before he died tragically of leukemia in 2013. Some companies have particular strengths, such as Monty Tiwa's Moviesta Pictures that has a large script development team that can quickly convert a story idea into a solid and shootable script.

For big production companies, allowing young filmmakers to handle the creative side is not just convenient; it also means they can concentrate on being producers rather than micro-managing film projects. Sunil Samtani of Rapi Films acknowledges the benefits he gets as a producer from this working relationship:

> I just feel like I try not to give my idea to them. I just get worried. They have to work on it, make a synopsis out of my idea, but is it going to work? I would rather have it from the locals, the local Indonesians. Because I feel the story is more local, and looks better, because I might have this way of thinking. I like this kind of movie, but it's only going to work for the mid to high class, which I don't want. I'd rather go for mid to low class. High class people they only go for the American movies. So I try to have the directors come up with a good story and bring it to me. If it works, it works.[66]

Producer Sunil Samtani acknowledges that young filmmakers give him stories grounded in the realities and interests of local, mainstream audiences. His role as producer is to assess, commission, and finance projects working with a particular creative team. The day I spoke to Samtani, writer/director Viva Westi had just dropped off a number of synopses, which Samtani would read and consider. Less than a year later, Rapi Films released *Not for Sale* (2010) written by Viva Westi and directed by Nayato Fio Nuala.

Likewise, Multivision has been producing content for television for two decades and has a dedicated film department. In 2008, the division was headed by producer Wicky Olindo, and assisted by former in-house scriptwriter Ve Handojo, who together are responsible for vetting script ideas and commercializing them to fit Multivision's business model. Handojo describes his work as follows:

> I dare to say that I don't have any room in my brain to read new ideas [laughs]. Come up with an idea, and give it to me, and I will develop it. I can help you develop it. If you want to work with us, we develop their ideas, so that your movie will be in line with our line, with our line of business: the commercial movies. If you're not ready to commercialize your ideas, you'd better go to Kalyana [Shira], you'd better go to whatever. . . . A concept may come to me and I would say, just reading the paper, this will go for 300 [thousand] audience max, so can you work it on a budget under 1M [one billion] rupiah? Can you make it with that budget? If you're not ready we're not going to do it. Things like that, analyze the script very fast.[67]

66. Sunil Samtani, personal interview, October 19, 2009.
67. Ve Handojo, personal interview, November 20, 2008.

While clearly commercially orientated, this assessment is also transparent, based as it is on market considerations. It gives filmmakers a clear indication of their film's potential, and how it might fit the framework of a commercial company like Multivision.

Yet the outsourcing mode of production has left directors and creative teams compromised. Young filmmakers are caught between the demands of a production system in which the organizational independence they fought so hard to attain following the end of the New Order does not always match the creative independence of making films the way they want to. Awi Suryadi explains his dilemma:

> Sometimes I think it's a shame that filmmaking in Indonesia is at a point where the system is quick and fast, because a lot of the directors work freelance. They get a contract and the system is wholesale or a package system. Like 'I give you this money, you make me a film' and of course they are looking to profit and so quality is compromised. That's a pity, but on the other hand I hang out with Nayato [Fio Nuala] because I think as a person he is great because he has this committed crew, because he has made a lot of films, and lots of people depend on him, they respect him.[68]

Hanung Bramantyo sums up his position in a similar way: "Directors are situated in a dilemma. On one side we have to save the national film industry, on the other we have to maintain our idealism."[69]

Given that there were so many expectations pressuring this new generation of filmmakers to be bastions of expression and free speech while increasing their output, their decision to work with the old commercial producers has disappointed some observers. Primarily the criticism levelled at directors is that they are participating in a system of cheap-and-fast production in which their skills as filmmakers are not valued. One film reviewer describes director Hanny Saputra as "a seriously gifted filmmaker, who is somehow constantly stuck with bad scripts."[70] Erwin Arnada, producer with independent company Rexinema, says the following:

> Lots of our directors downgrade their standards just to . . . just to make a film. Obey the producer, do what the producer wants. Like Rudi [Soedjarwo] now makes films carelessly. Monty Tiwa, Jose [Poernomo] as well . . . I feel sorry for lots of these directors who are treated that way by producers.[71]

68. "Sometimes saya mikir sayang ya perfilman Indonesia dibawanya kesini ma sistem kerja cepet dan murah, karena memang directors itu banyak yang freelance dapet kontrak dan sistemnya itu sistem borongan gitu atau sistem paket gitu. Ya, I give you this money, you make me a film tentunya mereka harus kejar profit kan ya kualitas yang dikompromiin. Nah itu sebenernya sangat sayang cuma on the other hand saya ngelayap sama Nayato karena I think as maksudnya sebagai man tuh dia hebat karena kru-kru nya sejahtera gitu, ya kan karena banyak film kan, banyak orang yang tergantung dengan dia gitu, sama respek kayaknya." Awi Suryadi, personal interview, June 6, 2008.
69. "Sutradara berdiri pada posisi yang dilematis. Di satu sisi kita harus menyelamatkan industri perfilman nasional, di sisi lain kita harus mempertahankan idealisme." "Hanung Bramantyo: 'Jangan Bikin Film Kacangan,'" *Behind the Screen* 2, no. 8 (June 2006): 11.
70. Rizal Iwan, "Poor script a letdown in 'Love is Cinta,'" *The Jakarta Post*, May 20, 2007.
71. "Banyak sutradara kita yang mendown-grade kualifikasi dirinya hanya gara-gara itu . . . gara-gara untuk mau

This is a sentiment shared by many directors themselves, as director Viva Westi attests:

> Sometimes I think that as directors we compromise too much with producers. Like with MD [Pictures] my fellow directors have to follow what they want. Lots of them, like Multivision or whoever, have that condition. They don't care what you make as long as it sells. They don't care if the sound is inaudible, if the picture is unclear, if it's not to standard, they don't care as long as they make lots of money, that's it.[72]

When Rudi Soedjarwo had immense success with *Pocong 2* (2006), made extremely cheaply, "Rudi can do it" became the rebuttal to directors wanting bigger budgets for their productions. Luckily, says scriptwriter Jujur Prananto, Rudi's success did not last.[73]

One of the most outspoken critics of the current production scenario is director Joko Anwar. He pejoratively calls filmmakers who outsource themselves as "directors for hire," contrasting them with directors like himself who have "something to say."[74] He describes the following scenario: "For example, someone gets a call from a producer to make a film. 'Mmmm [he asks] What's the budget? One billion? Ok, I'll do it, what's the story?'"[75] For him, discussion and agreement over the budget come before the story or script. This would seem to be what Chand Parwez Servia asked of director Nayato Fio Nuala: "I said don't think too much, I give you the title 'Ada Hantu di Sekolah' [There's a Ghost in the School]. Just do it. Make it fun."[76] Sure enough, *Ada Hantu di Sekolah* was released in 2004, written by scriptwriter Ery Sofid who works closely with Nayato. Here a film project is reduced to a minimum budget and a vague concept or just a title, with the result that this contract system risks giving rise to slipshod films, without concern for storytelling or quality.[77] Much then depends on the negotiation between filmmaker and producer and the

bikin film. Nurutin produser, produser mau ini diturutin. Kaya Rudi sekarang bikin film juga udah sembarangan. Monty Tiwa, Jose juga. . . . Saya sih kasihan banyak sutradara-sutradara yang di-treat sama produser." Erwin Arnada, personal interview, June 16, 2008.

72. "Kadang-kadang aku pikir sebagai sutradara kita suka banyak banget kompromi dengan produser. Kaya dengan MD pasti teman-temen director harus mengikuti apa yang mereka mau. Banyak ya kaya apa ya misal Multivision atau apa mereka pasti mereka juga punya. Mereka kan semata-mata terserah bikinya mau seperti apa yang penting film itu laku. Mereka tidak perduli mau suaranya tidak terdengar, gambar belang-belang, gak standart, mereka ga perduli asal mereka dapat untung banyak, udah." Viva Westi, personal interview, June 5, 2008.
73. "Rudi aja bisa." Jujur Prananto, personal interview, December 5, 2008.
74. "Percakapan Joko Anwar, Edwin dan Eric Sasono," *Rumah Film*, 2008. http://old.rumahfilm.org/wawancara/wawancara_jokoedwin_1.htm.
75. "Misalnya seseorang dipanggil sama produser untuk bikin film, mmmm (dia tanya) berapa budget? Satu M? oke gue bikinin, ceritanya apa?" "Percakapan Joko Anwar, Edwin dan Eric Sasono," *Rumah Film*, 2008, http://old.rumahfilm.org/wawancara/wawancara_jokoedwin_1.htm, accessed 8/1/2011.
76. Chand Parwez Servia, personal interview, July 17, 2008.
77. Candra Aditya, "Interview: Joko Anwar Uncensored (Part 1)," *Provoke Online*, April 20, 2015. http://www.provoke-online.com/index.php/candra-aditya/4132-interview-joko-anwar-uncensored-part-1.

willingness of the filmmaker to use the opportunity to make films with "something to say," as a number have with the horror genre discussed in the next chapter.[78]

Joko Anwar personally encountered this problem when working with MD Pictures on his dark noir thriller *Kala* (*Dead Time*, 2008). MD Pictures had split from Multivision Plus and wanted to mark their entry into feature film production with a new and exciting title. Anwar's producer for the film, Damiana Widowati, spoke of the nightmare they had with MD Pictures:

> they thought *Kala* is [a] horror movie. And then they found out it's not on the offline session [i.e., in editing]. On the offline session! You don't understand. It means that they didn't read the script, right? Oh my god, it happened![79]

For filmmakers who value their craft and the creative process, this kind of experience with commercial producers has given rise to a certain amount of suspicion about their commitment to developing better quality films and to supporting the film industry. At the same time, young filmmakers are hamstrung by the lack of alternative sources of funding and the lack of options they have.

The risk for the Indonesian film industry, according to Anwar, is that local audiences will be driven away from local films if the quality does not meet their expectations. Mechanisms of quality control—including independent distribution companies, robust film reviews, competition in the exhibition sector, and a lack of differentiation in what cinemas show (due to blanket release)—are weak or nonexistent. Because the main cinema chain (Cinema 21) is also the main distributor, there is no way to control what is released. In the current system a producer can book a release date, employ a director to make a film, print the film, and screen it. As a result, Anwar says, local cinemas are full of half-baked films that are not made with an audience in mind, but rather purely to fit a minimum budget. Another director, Ody Harahap, shares similar misgivings about the contract system, because the films he makes are not his, but are owned by the production company. This leads many directors to making poor quality films because they have no ownership stake in their films. Either way, directors have a dilemma in the contemporary industry when they produce for big production companies.

Fears about the quality of Indonesian films and shifts in power between commercial producers and filmmakers has become more pronounced recently as a new generation of filmmakers have entered the industry. As the first wave of directors established themselves and matured, their prices also increased based on their experience and skills, and their stature allows them significant bargaining power with producers. This allowed producers to look to younger filmmakers as a means of exerting greater control and keeping costs low. I have chosen not to name these

78. These relationships are not unusual across the world. Examples include films produced by Roger Corman in the United States or the Japanese pinku films of the 1960s and 1970. See, for example, Isolde Standish, *Politics Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

79. Damiana "Dotty" Widowati, personal interview, June 9, 2008.

directors or to judge the quality of these younger directors' films, but it has become a significant concern that quality is compromised because producers and the owners of production capital now have the upper hand in negotiations around film budgets, leading to greater exploitation. The balance of power has shifted in favor of the big production companies.

At a minimum, Indonesian film production is now rationalized and systematized to such a point that the industry is releasing two new films a week in Indonesian cinemas. With the financial backing of large production companies, film is now able to sustain itself and contribute to Indonesian pop culture in a significant way. Young creative filmmakers have provided a cultural bridge to the tastes, interests, and language of the new post-1998 audience for older producers. This intersection of capital and creativity has underpinned the revival of feature film as pop culture. Film's prominence is now visible in the ecosystem that has built up around film production including media outlets following industry news and gossip, new stars and actors establishing careers in the media industry, and plenty of crossover into other media such as television and publishing. These are all essential in building a culture industry that can contribute actively to mainstream pop culture. As the next chapter shows, even in the commercial genre of horror film, filmmaker autonomy has revealed important critical content and social commentary.

3
Horrifying Youth

The Horror Scenario

> All our horror films are stupid. They are only for scaring audiences [laughs].
>
> —Prolific horror director, Nayato Fio Nuala[1]

To appeal to mainstream audiences, young Indonesian filmmakers began working in globally recognizable film genres, of which horror has proven to be one of the most popular. Horror films accounted for almost one-third of all films made between 1998 and 2010 with many recording audiences over one million. More recently, *Pengabdi Setan* (*Satan's Slaves*, Joko Anwar, 2017) topped the box office in 2017 with an audience of 4.2 million, beating *Danur: I Can See Ghosts* (Awi Suryadi, 2017) and *Jailangkung* (Rizal Mantovani, 2017) which recorded audiences of 2.74 million and 2.55 million respectively earlier in the year. The prevalence of the horror film as a defining genre of post-1998 Indonesian cinema marks Indonesian cinema's return to mainstream pop culture. The consolidation of the horror genre in Indonesian cinema indicates how filmmakers have aligned their productive output into consistent and predictable genres while innovating in content. Horror's popularity with Indonesian audiences suggests that it was more than just a trend. Clearly, horror films appeal to contemporary Indonesian audiences, and this warrants further investigation.

As Steve Neale has noted in the case of Hollywood films,[2] genre is a structuring characteristic of large-scale cultural production industries, and provides predictability and stability in form and content. Mainstream pop culture—from music, to television, to cinema—are replete with what Keith Negus calls "genre cultures."[3] Genre in part provides templates for film producers to manage risk, identify audiences for the purposes of marketing, and enables audiences to engage with a film through the anticipation and realization of pleasure. At the same time, whilst genre is stabilizing, it also allows for innovation, as Neale posits in his description of genre

1. "Film horor kita bego semua. Cuma bikin takut penonton, ha-ha-ha . . ." "Film di Indonesia itu Ajaib Banget," *Koran Tempo*, June 4, 2006.
2. Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre," *Screen* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 45–66.
3. Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

as "instances of repetition and difference."[4] In the case of Indonesian horror, young filmmakers have successfully combined features of global horror with locally resonant tropes, iconography, and references. In doing so, they have modernized the Indonesian horror film for contemporary audiences and have been successful in translating the specific fears of post-1998 Indonesian audiences into a form at once generically familiar but also specific to the contemporary Indonesian context. Genre provides the means by which Indonesian filmmakers can reform the local horror film concept by adopting the global language of the horror film and its generic features while adapting it to fit the very specific context of post-1998 Indonesia.

By making horror films, young filmmakers have drawn on a staple genre of Indonesian cinema and popular culture. Films such as *Beranak Dalam Kubur* (*Birth in the Grave*, Awaludin and Ali Shahab, 1971), *Pengabdi Setan* (*Satan's Slaves*, Sisworo Gautama, 1980), *Telaga Angker* (*Haunted Lake*, Sisworo Gautama, 1984) and *Santet* (*Witchcraft*, Sisworo Gautama Putra, 1988) were popular on their original release, continue to be screened on television, and retain an important place in popular cultural memory. Indonesian horror films draw on local folklore, supernatural belief, and monster typologies, especially the *kuntilanak* or *pontianak*, a grotesque avenging female spirit. Even when feature film production declined in the 1990s, horror programming continued into television in serials such as *Si Manis Jembatan Ancol* (*The Sweetie of Ancol Bridge*, 1993), and "ghost hunting" shows.[5] Young filmmakers working after 1998 have drawn on this genre history and its codes and conventions, while updating the genre with new visual and editing techniques, learned in part from working in advertising and music video and drawing on the visual iconography of Thai and Japanese horror of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The cinema screen offers a new space for young filmmakers to reimagine the horror genre and to creatively use the audiovisual potential of the medium to scare audiences.

As Indonesian horror films began returning to cinemas in significant numbers, cultural critics reacted negatively, dismissing them as cheap, shallow, and vacuous. In global horror studies, this commonly noted phenomenon reflects the way in which horror films are seen as lowbrow, popular cinema. In Indonesia, too, many saw the return of the horror genre as a return to crass commercialism, since the horror genre is often seen as being easy to make, formulaic in its plot, and costing little money. Critic Hikmat Darmawan complains that contemporary Indonesian horror films, like those of the past, have bad and illogical stories. Only the cinematography of contemporary horror has improved, he says.[6] Pattisina finds little redeeming in the genre except that it provides a place for audiences to be frightened

4. Steve Neale, *Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 48.
5. Van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film*, 141–42.
6. Hikmat Darmawan, "Dosa Film Indonesia," *Rumah Film*, 2007. http://old.rumahfilm.org/artikel/artikel_dosa.htm.

together.[7] One reviewer of the film *Terowongan Casablanca* (*Casablanca Tunnel*, Nanang Istiabudi, 2007) notes:

> Like the majority of Indonesian horror films, *Terowongan Casablanca* does not offer anything special. The plot is superficial, the acting is standard that is to say average, and the appearance of the *kuntilanak* is far from scary.[8]

Especially in the aftermath of 1998 and *reformasi* giving new freedoms for expression, the horror revival was seen as symptomatic of the failure of pop culture creators to use the opportunity given to them, to be critical, or to tackle political issues. Film scholar Ekky Imanjaya chides post-1998 filmmakers saying:

> There is an absence of films that make critical or political comment. Most filmmakers have not used this opportunity, this atmosphere of democracy, to do what they longed for when the situation was repressive. As a matter of fact, a majority has not handled cinema as a medium to express their thoughts and feelings or to convey a message. Rather, they have shown preference for love or horror stories and suchlike themes, which entice more and more people to the cinemas and allow them, the filmmakers, to earn good money.[9]

Contrary to this characterization, as an enormous field of critical study has demonstrated, horror film mainstream appeal and social or political commentary need not be antithetical.[10] A popular genre like horror is not by default devoid of political or social commentary. Stuart Hall reminds us as to the political importance of popular culture when he says:

> Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured.[11]

Taking horror films therefore as a site of struggle, we can refer to the work of Robin Wood who draws on Sigmund Freud's concept of repression and the way in which the repressed reappears symptomatically. Robin Wood argues that repression does not only work at the individual level but whole populations repress certain types of "others" who are feared, disavowed, and denied recognition. Wood suggests that:

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7. Edna C. Pattisina, "Selamat Datang di Republik Hantu." *Kompas*, March 22, 2007.
8. "Seperti kebanyakan film horor Indonesia, *Terowongan Casablanca* tidak banyak menyajikan hal yang istimewa. Jalan ceritanya datar, akting para pemain standar alias biasa saja, dan penampakan kuntilanak jauh dari kesan menyeramkan." P. Hadriani, "Terowongan Casablanca," *Koran Tempo*, February 23, 2007.
9. Ekky Imanjaya, "Who's Afraid of Democracy: The Politics of Freedom in Indonesia," *Cinemaya* 1, no. 4 (2007): 8–11.
10. See Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Meraj Ahmed Mubarki, *Filming Horror: Hindi Cinema, Ghosts and Ideologies* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2016); Jon Towlson, *Subversive Horror Cinema: Countercultural Messages of Films from Frankenstein to the Present* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).
11. Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. R. Samuel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 228.

> One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its reemergence dramatized, as in our nightmares, as an object of horror, a matter for terror, and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression.[12]

Reading horror films therefore as symptomatic of what is repressed leads to questions about the makers of the films and the audiences they serve. Since these films are made primarily for a domestic audience who participate in an Indonesian media landscape, we must look for specific Indonesian sources of fear.

Following Adam Lowenstein,[13] this chapter will show that Indonesian horror films of the post-1998 era articulate a deeply repressed form of national trauma and a collective fear about its reemergence. Although Indonesia is emerging from a national cinema project to an era of globally connected pop culture, the concept of the nation as a shared, collective identity and experience remains strong. We look therefore to instances of national trauma, or what Linnie Blake calls the "wounds of nations."[14] Indonesia's collective traumas and fears are visible in the generic features of the post-1998 horror film. In uncovering those features, this chapter will show that the mainstream horror film is engaging with the violent and traumatic legacy of the New Order which began on September 30, 1965.

The Betrayal of G30S/PKI

> Indonesian history goes from trauma to trauma, the most obvious cases being the Japanese era, G30S/PKI [i.e., 1965–1966] that victimized more than 500,000 people, the New Order regime to the current transitionary period that has produced various forms of political and social violence that we have not yet had a chance to describe.[15]
>
> —Garin Nugroho

In order to trace the origins of Indonesia's collective trauma, I return to the foundational events of the 1960s that brought the New Order into existence and which have left indelible scars on Indonesia. This is made more important because the euphoria that surrounded the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in 1998 was often accompanied by the naïve belief that what had happened over those thirty-two years was in the past and should be forgotten. Escaping the past

12. Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s," in *Horror, the Film Reader*, ed. Mark Jancovich (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 28.
13. Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
14. Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).
15. "Sejarah Indonesia adalah sebuah kisah dari trauma ke trauma, sebutlah yang gampang, dari masa Jepang hingga G30S/PKI yang menelan korban tak kurang 500.000 manusia, masa pemerintahan Orde Baru hingga periode transisi sekarang ini yang melahirkan berbagai bentuk kekerasan sosial dan politik yang belum sempat kita deskripsikan." Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa*, 35.

is difficult, especially a past as traumatic, violent, and unresolved as the history of modern Indonesia. It is not uncommon to hear it said that dwelling on the past will hamper efforts to fully realize the aspirations and hopes of reform. Those who have tried to question the legacy of the New Order, and the violations it and its agencies committed against individuals and groups have often been rebutted by those insisting that the past should be buried and forgotten lest the "wound" (*luka*) reopen; itself an acknowledgment that awful things happened. Such wounds, as Blake posits, often come to define a collective experience of nationhood through the "cultural legacy of trauma."[16] Dealing with the past in ways that reveal the truth and provide justice have been elusive in Indonesia, especially since many of those in positions of power could be implicated and often actively work against reconciliation and historical exploration.

As I outlined in Chapter 1, the New Order was a military-backed authoritarian regime that relied on the deployment of violence to maintain social and political control.[17] Its reign was ushered in by the violent events of 1965–1966 when soldiers led by General Suharto were given permission in the Supersemar letter of March 11, 1966, to use "whatever means necessary" to restore order and stability following the abortive coup of September 30–October 1, 1965. Using Supersemar and blaming the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as ultimate masterminds, over the following months the PKI and its associated organizations were purged in acts of mass violence. Between half a million to one million people were imprisoned, murdered, killed, or disappeared,[18] due to their links (real or imagined), to the PKI and its affiliates. Hilmar Farid argues that the killing orchestrated by the ascendant military faction constituted "bureaucratic violence" and was systemically carried out against the PKI by the military,[19] often through military-backed civilian militias. In addition, citizens killed citizens in widespread cases of horizontal violence, leaving deep scars on Indonesian society. 1965–1966 has concerned many scholars of Indonesia both in terms of social upheaval, and as a defining event of modern Indonesia history.[20] As Stoler notes, the events of 1965–1966 were the culmination of political and factional tensions building in the 1960s within the context of a coercive political system established since colonialism.[21]

16. Blake, *The Wounds of Nations*, 3.
17. Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia; Fatally Belonging* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).
18. Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 550–63.
19. Hilmar Farid, "Indonesia's Original Sin: Mass Killings and Capitalist Expansion, 1965–66," in *The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and Chua Beng-Huat (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 207–22.
20. Lowell Dittmer, "The Legacy of Violence in Indonesia," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 541–44; John Roosa "The State of Knowledge about an Open Secret: Indonesia's Mass Disappearances of 1965–66," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2 (2016): 281–97. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911816000474.
21. Ann Laura Stoler, "On the Uses and Abuses of the Past in Indonesia: Beyond the Mass Killings of 1965," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 642–50. See also Justus M. van der Kroef, "Interpretations of the 1965 Indonesian Coup: A Review of the Literature," *Pacific Affairs* 43, no. 4 (1970): 557–77.

These events served as the founding myth of the New Order regime: that Suharto and the military had rescued the nation from chaos and communism by restoring order and stability through the strength of the armed forces. Throughout the New Order, "the events of 1965–66 could be conjured up as a terrible warning" against those opposing its rule.[22] The New Order would then go on to perpetrate numerous violent incidents against its citizens: the ongoing suppression of separatist movements in West Papua, Aceh, and East Timor; the Petrus killings[23] of *preman* (gangsters) in Jakarta in the early 1980s;[24] the killing of Muslims in Tanjung Priok in 1984;[25] the occupation of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia)[26] party office to prevent pro-democracy activities in 1996; the shooting and abduction of students and activists in 1998; and the looting and sexual violence targeting ethnic Chinese in May 1998. As with the 1965–1966 killing, these violent incidents were often perpetrated by civilians, mobs, hired thugs, or vigilantes.[27] Such violence occurred within the framework of an authoritarian regime, which used state violence for repression, often via the military's *dwifungsi* (dual function) policy of defending the nation from outside threats, and maintaining order and stability within.

Given that film was assumed to be a potent medium for persuasion and propaganda, cinema was used extensively to articulate a state ideology of violence *in potentia*. Principally, violence in film was deployed to construct hagiographies about the role of the military in the 1945 to 1949 struggle for independence and its role in national formation. Examples include *Mereka Kembali* (*They Have Returned*, Nawi Ismail, 1972), *Pasukan Berani Mati* (*Daredevil Commandos*, Imam Tantowi, 1982), *Bandung Lautan Api* (*Bandung Sea of Fire*, Alam Surawidjaja, 1974); many of which were funded by various military commands. Usmar Ismail's oeuvre: *Darah dan Doa* (1950), *Enam Djam di Djogdja* (*Six Hours in Yogyakarta*, 1951), and *Lewat Djam Malam* (*Past Curfew*, 1954), all of which presented the military as integral to the revolutionary struggle, were the most highly venerated. Even great nationalist epics by idealist directors, such as Teguh Karya's *November 1828* (1979) and Eros Djarot's *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* (1988), legitimize the violence of proto-nationalism because it was directed against Dutch colonizers. In general, violence against these colonizers and against other threats to the integrity of the nation (Darul Islam, PKI, criminality)

22. Cribb, "Unresolved Problems," 550.
23. Petrus is the portmanteau of Penembak Misterius, or Mysterious Shootings. Gangsters in Jakarta were kidnapped, shot, and then left in public areas as a warning to others.
24. James T. Siegel, *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-Revolution Today* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); Joshua Barker, "State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal Contagion in Suharto's New Order," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict R. O'G Anderson (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2001), 20–53.
25. Peter Burns, "The Post Priok Trials: Religious Principles and Legal Issues," *Indonesia*, 47 (1989): 61–88.
26. Led by Megawati Soekarnoputri, the daughter of President Soekarno. She would become President herself from 2001 to 2004.
27. Benedict R. O'G Anderson, ed., *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2001); Cribb, "Unresolved Problems."

were deployed to justify the role of the armed forces and the use of violence as a legitimate means of maintaining national integrity and stability.[28]

Displays of violence in film culminated in the 1984 film *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September (The Betrayal of the 30 September Movement)*, which would become possibly the most viewed film in modern Indonesia.[29] As mentioned in Chapter 1, each year on the anniversary of September 30, national television broadcast *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September* and school students were made to watch the film as part of their national education. What was most perverse about this film was that children as young as five were subjected to its violence. Its purpose was to propagandize the population, especially young Indonesians who had been born after the events of the 1960s, to remind them what happened, why the New Order regime had come into existence, and why it was necessary to suppress any discussion of communism. Even if they had not lived through the events of 1965–1966, they could still witness its violence, experience the trauma of their parents' generation, and understand that the New Order was the bringer of order.[30]

As a result, a whole generation of young Indonesians have violent images of 1965 etched into their collective memory. To understand how deeply the memories of 1965 are etched in collective memory, a recent account from an anonymous writer outlines the "deep-rooted anxiety and distress, along with a deeper-rooted wish for catharsis and redemption" that 1965 evokes in her. She remembers watching *Pengkhianatan Gerakan 30 September* as part of her schooling and wonders about the psychological effects it had on herself and millions of other schoolchildren forced to watch the film. She asks,

> What happens to a very young brain that has barely understood violence, when they see images and hear tales of wildly, horrifically violent acts that are portrayed as a nation's founding mythology? . . . What nightmares literal and subdued have we carried with us and never shared with each other?

She remembers the violence of the film, specifically, the portrayal of women Gerwani members as sadistic, and wonders how such a film got through censorship. In looking back on that period she says that "There is also a need for articulating, for bringing to light, and for healing the parts of ourselves that are never spoken of."[31] Those who attended school between 1984 and 1998 (Indonesians born roughly between 1968 and 1993) came of age in and through the tumult of the 1997–1998 Asian Financial Crisis and the political revolution that forced Suharto

28. In fact, there has been a recent return to the nationalist narrative in war films set in the independence period of 1945 to 1949, where violence is legitimately used against the colonizers. Specifically, see the Merdeka Trilogy (see Chapter 2).
29. Officially it recorded an audience of 700,000 at the box-office, the highest for a film made during the New Order. Due to the compulsory screenings and yearly broadcast, this figure is probably much higher.
30. Budi Irawanto, *Film, Ideologi dan Militer: Hegemoni Militer dalam Sinema Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, Yayasan Adikarya IKAPI & Ford Foundation, 1999).
31. Anonymous, "Nightmares of 1965," *The New Inquiry*, December 21, 2015. http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/nightmares-of-1965/.

to resign. They are now the young adults of post-*reformasi* Indonesia aged in their twenties and thirties and compose the majority of contemporary cinemagoers and filmmakers. A whole generation has been traumatized by a very powerful piece of propaganda cinema.

After 1998, a number of filmmakers used feature film as a means to represent and explore the violent legacy of the New Order regime. *Pasir Berbisik* (*Whispering Sands*, Nan Achnas, 2000) is the story of a mother and daughter struggling to live in a strange sandy landscape. An important feminist work,[32] it also alludes to the violence of the New Order with mysterious corpses that wash up on the beach and soldiers trampling through the landscape. It relies almost entirely on allusion and realist allegory to describe the New Order, including the sandy, barren landscape. Tackling a more specific event, *Marsinah Cry Justice!* (Slamet Rahardjo, 2002) dramatizes the death of labor activist Marsinah in 1993, as mentioned in Chapter 1. The film concentrates on Marsinah's colleagues who were interrogated and tortured by security personnel. Although the perpetrators are clearly security personnel they are not identified directly and the film avoids showing the circumstances of Marsinah's death. Ironically, the film clearly shows local television station SCTV reporting on Marsinah's death at the time, a telling reminder about the growing power of television in the early 1990s. Likewise, Garin Nugroho's film *Puisi Tak Kuburkan* (*The Poet*, 1999) shows political prisoners in Aceh waiting execution in 1965. Nugroho describes his motivation for making the film:

> Although I had no experience or knowledge about what happened in 1965 I grew up in the shadow of this event and under the authoritarian system that followed. Even though I'd done nothing wrong I kept coming up against things that forced me to think about what had happened. . . . This means that many people are still suffering from the consequences of 1965, whether they were connected with the communists or not. There is no exact figure about how many were killed but whatever the numbers everyone in Indonesia lives under this shadow.[33]

Despite being important attempts to deal with violence committed under the New Order, these three films had limited circulation, and only indirectly identified the perpetrators of oppression and violence. Nugroho captures a sense of the trauma that Indonesians continue to live with.

Beyond film, other efforts were made to confront and deal with the violent events of modern Indonesian history, most notably 1965–1966 and the May 1998 riots. A number of books were published, discussions were held, and a few films were released that have attempted to correct the historical record through eyewitness testimony and historical revision. In the early years of *reformasi*, official fact finding and/or truth and reconciliation commissions were proposed but never

32. Intan Paramaditha, "Pasir Berbisik and New Women's Aesthetics in Indonesian Cinema," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 49, 2007. https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/PasirBerbisik/.

33. Richard Phillips, "To Explore One of the Dark Episodes in Indonesian History," *World Socialist Web Site*, September 19, 2001, http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/sep2001/ganu-s19.shtml.

realized.[34] Robert Cribb argues there are "serious misgivings about the likely effects of reexamining 1965–66,"[35] given the trauma it might evoke and the more pressing problems plaguing the country. This silence may work to serve a particular elite, and by extension the security forces, implicated in the violence and whose legitimacy would be undermined by such investigations.[36] Much of the initial work has been limited in its reach, and in some cases have met resistance from the state, military and Islamic groups. In 2000, reformist President Abdurrahman Wahid issued an apology on behalf of his organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which participated in the killings, and promised to lift the decree banning communism, but this was met with widespread opposition inside and outside the government, eventually leading to his impeachment in 2001.

Nations as imagined communities not only share a sense of shared destiny and identify, but must by extension harbor collective fears, discomforts, and a shared sense of what Lowenstein calls national trauma should the nation be founded on or experienced unresolved acts of violence or displacement in its past.[37] Following the three decades of the New Order, there are unresolved issues around the violence of the past that continue to be experienced as trauma in the collective unconscious today. Since official avenues of reconciliation or justice are largely unavailable and without any direct means of revealing and dealing with this past, because efforts are stymied or criticized for opening old wounds, then less obvious or indirect forms of expression and catharsis will invariably be found "that may allow for the cultural assimilation of traumatic experiences that is a vital prerequisite for healing."[38]

For Adam Lowenstein, these forms of allegorical representation of past traumas can be found in horror cinema which presents "an allegorical moment, situated at the unpredictable and often painful juncture where past and present collide."[39] Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin, Lowenstein argues that "the allegorical moment exists as a mode of confrontation, where representation's location between past and present, as well as between film, spectator, and history, demands to be recalibrated."[40] This opens critical perspectives on history and raises difficult questions about memory, experience, and the ideological functioning of society. At the same time, horror films offer to their audience a space in which a traumatized population can view their own nightmares on screen.[41] Since Indonesia has not been able to deal with its violent past through open description, then it is through horror films that the means by which the silenced and repressed history of the New Order and its violence can be critically exposed.

34. Stoler, "Uses and Abuses."
35. Cribb, "Unresolved Problems," 562.
36. Elizabeth Fuller Collins, "Indonesia: A Violent Culture?," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 582–604.
37. Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation*.
38. Blake, *The Wounds of Nations*, 14.
39. Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation*, 9.
40. Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation*, 12.
41. Veronica Kusuma, "Hantu-Hantu dalam Film Horor Indonesia." Kajian Media Departemen Film, Fakultas Film dan Televisi, Institut Kesenian Jakarta, Jakarta, 2009.

Reliving the Horror

In the period after the end of the New Order, despite failing at the box office, a number of horror films revealed much about what would change in terms of audience success after 1998. For example, *Kafir* (*Nonbeliever*, Mardali Syarief, 2002), produced by old company Starvision was described by *The Jakarta Post* film reviewer Joko Anwar as a "corny, unintentionally hilarious movie [that] will remind viewers of a local horror flick from the 80s."[42] Syarief had been making films since the 1970s and still employed now out-of-date New Order iconography. Later in 2005, PT Tobali Indah released *Psikopat* (*Psychopath*, Rudy Aryanto, 2005) a slasher film about a serial killer, the first of its kind in Indonesian cinema. It too flopped because the idea of a serial killer is alien to most Indonesians who have little awareness of or fear towards the figure of a psychopath, unlike in American horror films where serial killers are a generic staple in franchises like *Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980). In both cases, filmmakers were employing old visual styles with content that was either outdated or irrelevant, suggesting the interests and fears of audiences lay elsewhere.

Yet horror and mysticism had not disappeared from pop culture in the 1990s, and much of the horror and mystical programming shifted to television.[43] Indicative here is the career trajectory of actress Suzzanna who played many iconic roles in horror films in the 1970s and 1980s before switching to similar roles in television in the 1990s. She only returned to feature film in 2008 with an appearance in *Hantu Ambulance* (*Ambulance Ghost*, Koya Pagayo).[44] Television programming represented a continuation of the filmmaking style of 1980s horror and was targeted at a mass audience, often less uneducated, rural, and poor viewers. Young people returning to the cinema after 1998 wanted something different from what they could get on television. Their cultural diet had been shaped by Japanese and Thai horror and they wanted a similar experience when they went to see an Indonesian made horror film at the cinema. Luckily, the new filmmakers who brought horror back into the cinema reimagined the genre for the post-1998 audience thereby engineering a significant development in the remaking of mainstream pop culture.

The return to horror film production attracted many of the new young filmmakers who entered the industry after 1998, including Helfi Kardit, Jose Poernomo, Arie Azis, Hanung Bramantyo, Nayato Fio Nuala, Rizal Mantovani, Rudi Soedjarwo, Monty Tiwa, Viva Westi, and Toto Hoedi amongst others. The new wave of post-1998 horror was initiated by music video directors Rizal Mantovani and Jose Poernomo in their film *Jelangkung* (2001),[45] which became a low-budget sensation

42. Joko E. H. Anwar, "New Local Films Create Stimulating Phenomenon," *The Jakarta Post*, December 28, 2002.
43. van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film*, 133–56.
44. "Suzanna: 'Syukur Bisa Menakut-nakuti Anda,'" *Tempo*, February 17, 2003.
45. It is hard to translate *Jelangkung* (a.k.a. *Jailangkung*) in one or two words. A *jelangkung* is a kind of figure or doll constructed from a coconut shell (the head) and using wood, bamboo, and cloth for the limbs. It is associated with a traditional game or ritual used to summon spirits.

as noted in Chapter 2. It ran in the cinemas for three months and was seen by over one-and-a-half-million people. It so convinced viewers of its authenticity that many believed the fictitious haunted village in the film (*Angkerbatu*, or Haunted Rock) actually existed.[46] By combining the aesthetics and editing of music videos with Indonesian mythology, Mantovani and Poernomo modernized horror for young audiences. Mantovani's films are, for Kusuma, a "historical break with the horror films before them."[47]

Jelangkung opens on a Javanese village called Angkerbatu in 1938 where a twelve-year-old boy is ritually killed and then buried by a mob of scared and angry villagers who fear he is the harbinger of disaster. Cutting to the present day, the film introduces a group of young Jakartan teenagers who enjoy exploring haunted sites around the capital city. Bored with fruitless searches, they hear about Angkerbatu and decide to venture to the old village. Upon arrival, they discover the ruins of the village and the boy's grave, but do not see any ghosts and so return to Jakarta disappointed. Unbeknownst to the group, one of the boys had tried to summon the ghost by planting a *jelangkung* (anthropomorphic totem) in the grave. One by one, they are haunted by a mysterious presence, and after consulting a *dukun* (folk sorcerer), come to understand that the boy's ghost is haunting them. The *dukun* advises them to return to Angkerbatu and remove the *jelangkung*, thereby returning the boy's ghost to its grave. With an air of foreboding, they return to Angkerbatu, but meet resistance from the ghost, who causes them to hallucinate, and in the ensuing melee one boy kills his girlfriend. The film ends with the ghost leaping directly at the viewer.

Jelangkung was not only a popular sensation, which set off an Indonesian horror revival, it also laid the groundwork for the new codes and conventions of the contemporary Indonesian genre. It is useful therefore to go through them one by one, drawing additional examples from subsequent horror films. The new-style horror films in Indonesia are clearly influenced by Thai and Japanese horror aesthetics, which during the late 1990s and into the 2000s became globally renowned with titles such as *Ringu* (*The Ring*, Hideo Nakata, 1998), *Nang Nak* (Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999), *Ju-On: The Curse* (Takashi Shimizu, 2000), and *The Eye* (Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang Phat, 2002), putting "Asian horror" on the world cinema map. These films influenced local Indonesian filmmakers through their conceptualization and execution of ghost stories. This could be seen in the visual design of the regionally specific ghosts which became much more demonic and stylized, drawing inspiration from the visual style of the *onryō* ghost found in Japanese horror films. Horror films emphasized mood and atmosphere through the use of music, sound effects, lighting, and mise en scène, and as a result, the films became much more frightening. Indonesian filmmakers also drew on the visual language learnt in music video and advertising such as integrating music and sound effects, dynamic

46. Rizal Mantovani, personal interview, November 5, 2008.
47. Kusuma, "Hantu-Hantu."

Figure 3.1: A *kuntilanak* faces off with a *pocong* in *Pocong vs Kuntilanak* (David Poernomo, 2008). Image courtesy of David Poernomo.

camera techniques, and fast editing to heighten both suspense and fright. These traits distinguished young Indonesian horror filmmakers from those of the 1980s and 1990s, rendering their visual language better attuned to their audiences.

Despite the modernization of the horror genre in Indonesia, local filmmakers did not abandon the familiar *kuntilanak* (a.k.a. *pontianak*) ghost as the supernatural element. Drawn from folklore, the *kuntilanak* is an avenging female spirit who derives her power from her desire to seek revenge against those who betrayed or harmed her in life. She is a monstrous figure with long hair, sometimes appearing as a seductive maiden before turning into her frightening, grotesque form.[48] Typically, she will have been murdered or has died from suicide following a crime or misadventure related to sexuality and procreation such as terminating a pregnancy or losing her virginity to an unfaithful man, and then subsequently buried without proper funeral rites. This combination of events will cause her to return from the grave to seek revenge on those who wronged her. Variations of this theme include the *suster ngesot* (crawling nurse), *sundel bolong* (whore with a hole), and *pocong* (corpse in burial shroud) that have also become staple ghost types in post-1998 Indonesian horror.

Rizal Mantovani says that using the *pontianak* or *kuntilanak* ghost ensures that horror films maintain a cultural relevance to their audience.[49] Within the Malay world—encompassing Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia—there are a pantheon of ghosts, spirits, and creatures of which the *kuntilanak* is one of the most recognizable and been subject of the most filmic representations. She is the creature that children are warned about, who lurks outside the home, and who acts as a terrible warning against sexual promiscuity and wanton behavior. Her appearance similarly speaks

48. Sophie Siddique, "Haunting Visions of the Sundelbolong: Vampire Ghosts and the Indonesian National Imaginary," *Spectator* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 24–33. http://cinema.usc.edu/assets/098/15878.pdf.
49. Personal interview, November 5, 2008.

of patriarchal sexual violence, and allows victimized women to temporarily become on-screen "aggressors" who seek retribution against men.[50] The *kuntilanak* is a both a type of ghostly creature and a narrative motif of revenge.

Unlike horror films of the New Order,[51] most new horror movies lack closure at the end of the film representing a significant and novel development in the horror genre in an Indonesian context. While previously horror films would conclude with the confinement or defeat of the ghost, new Indonesian horror films are often characterized by open-ended, or ambiguous endings where there is no such defeat or restoration of the status quo. While this open-ended ending allows for the possibility of sequels within the commercial imperative of the film industry, as is also commonly found in other horror films from around the world, it also signals a distinct break with the narrative structure of the New Order horror film. In New Order horror, closure was personified in the figure of a *deus ex machina* Islamic priest (*kyai* or *ustadz*) who would arrive in the village and use monotheistic Islam to restore order. According to producer Ferry Angriawan:

> The Film Censorship Board was then resorting to many ways to interfere. If the denouement in the plot did not feature a Muslim cleric, the film would be rejected. To be on the safe side, we had to make sure that a Muslim cleric would appear and solve the problem.[52]

By contrast, open endings in post-1998 Indonesian horror films suggest that the ghost or the evil it represents cannot be defeated so easily, and that evil continues to exist. Islam was used during the New Order as an instrument of state control, but now that Islam is decoupled from state ideology, young filmmakers are less inclined to portray Islam as an instrument of control in horror. Rizal Mantovani himself believes that religion and horror should not mix because it is to him "heresy" (*musyrik*).[53] In part, it reflects a generational belief in the inability of institutions such as religion to contain and defeat supernatural power that the ghosts represent.

Familiarity for Indonesian audiences is further established by embedding ghost stories in locations where Indonesian urban legends are based. Titles such as *Kereta Hantu Manggarai* (*Manggarai Ghost Train*, Nayato Fio Nuala, 2008), *Terowongan Casablanca* (*Casablanca Tunnel*, Nanang Istiabudi, 2007), *Rumah Pondok Indah* (*The House in Pondok Indah*, Irwan Siregar, 2006), and *Hantu Jeruk Perut* (*The*

50. Adeline S.-H. Kueh, "Pontianak and Her Sisters: Representations of Monstrosity in Southeast Asian Popular Culture," What Lies Beneath (Postgraduate Conference) Melbourne, Australia. November 6, 2003.
51. Maren Wilger, "'Sundelbolong' as a Mode of Femininity: Analysis of Popular Ghost Movies in Indonesia," in *Ghost Movies in Southeast Asia and Beyond: Narratives, Cultural Contexts, Audiences*, ed. Peter J. Bräunlein (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 106.
52. "Indonesian Horror Films: From Babi Ngepet to Jelangkung," *Tempo*, February 24, 2003.
53. "Saya tidak akan pernah mencampurkan film horror dengan agama, karena beda. Film horror ya film horror, agama ya agama. . . . Memang saya konsentrasi dengan entertainment, pure entertainment. Dan memang secara belief, unsur kepercayaan saya, sangat salah kalau saya memasukkan unsur agama kedalam horror karena kalau kita menggabungkan itu akhirnya menjadi musyrik." Rizal Mantovani, personal interview, November 5, 2008.

Ghost of Jeruk Perut, Koya Pagayo, 2006) all refer to "haunted" sites around Jakarta. In part this is a commercial strategy to capitalize on urban legends, but also connects what happens in the films with what the audience may already believe. Those films not referring to a specific location are still located within an urban imagination, occurring either within the city or in its hinterland. In these films, teenagers travel outside the confines of the city to haunted places such as forests,[54] lakes,[55] old country houses,[56] and even a "ghost" island.[57] Others are set in modern institutions, familiar to any urbanite, most often schools, apartment blocks, and hospitals.[58] Thus the proliferation of ghosts occurs with respect to an urban (often Jakartan) subject position, contrasting urban secular life with places where spirits, ghosts, and the supernatural manifest.

Urban subjectivity is further established through the genre's broader international focus on high school students, university students, and young unmarried adults as primary protagonists. Coming almost exclusively from Jakarta, these teenagers are presented as normal, middle to upper class youth who lead modern consumer lifestyles. They hang out, go clubbing, socialize, and lead otherwise carefree lives—as teens do in American horror films from *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978) to *It Follows* (David Robert Mitchell, 2014). Their encounters with ghosts drive the narrative. This differs from New Order horror films which featured the social institutions important to New Order ideology namely, families, villages, and young married couples. New horror focuses on individual youth and their friends to reflect much more strongly the audience themselves. This fits with the broader observation that the contemporary audience for Indonesian films are young Indonesians aged in their late teens to early twenties. At the same time, this allows Indonesian horror to follow global horror conventions in exploring coming-of-age themes such as sexuality, infidelity, first love and betrayal, friendship, and growing up.

Teen sexuality and the transition from childhood to adulthood are central thematic concerns in many global horror films such as *It Follows* and these appear in the revenge narrative of the *kuntilanak*. For example, the ghost of Astari in *Terowongan Casablanca* (*Casablanca Tunnel*, Nanang Setiabudi, 2007) says to Refa (Nino Fernandez) before killing him, "Your biggest mistake was betraying me. And my biggest act of stupidity was trusting you to have sex with me."[59] Refa forced

54. *Hantu* (*Ghost*, Adrianto Sinaga, 2007), *Keramat* (*Sacred*, Monty Tiwa, 2009), *Pencarian Terakhir* (*The Final Search*, Affandi Abdul Rachman, 2008).
55. *Di Sini Ada Setan* (*There Is a Ghost Here*, Purnomo A. Chakil, 2008).
56. *Enam* (*Six*, Stephen Odang, 2007), *Hantu Ambulance* (*Ambulance Ghost*, Koya Pagayo, 2008), *Suster N* (*Nurse N*, Viva Westi, 2007).
57. *Pulau Hantu* (*Ghost Island*, Jose Poernomo, 2007) and its sequel *Pulau Hantu 2* (*Ghost Island 2*, Jose Poernomo, 2008).
58. Films set in schools include *Ada Hantu di Sekolah* (*There's a Ghost in the School*, Koya Pagayo, 2004), *Hantu Bangku Kosong* (*The Ghost of the Empty School Bench*, Helfy CH Kardit, 2006), *The Mirror* (Hanny R Saputra, 2005); in hospitals: *Suster Ngesot* (*The Crawling Nurse*), *Malam Jumat Kliwon* (*Ominous Friday Night*, Koya Pagayo, 2007), and *Bangsal 13* (*Ward 13*, Ody C Harahap, 2004).
59. "Kesalahan paling besar mu adalah menghianati aku. Dan kebodohan paling besar ku adalah mempercaya kamu untuk meniduri ku."

Astari (Asa Shara) to terminate her pregnancy, but during the procedure she wakes up and flees. Refa then kills Astari, burying her near his apartment. She returns to seek her revenge. Another example is *Suster Ngesot* (*Crawling Nurse*, 2007),[60] where two young trainee nurses Vira (Nia Ramadhani) and Silla (Donita) move to a hospital in Jakarta to work. They are housed in a room that has been unused for twenty years, awakening the resident "Crawling Nurse" ghost. Mike (Mike Lewis), Vira's boyfriend, is introduced to Silla and they have an affair soon after. In an old diary Vira discovers in the room, a letter appears on the page: the initial of the Crawling Nurse's next victim. The victim is always someone who is promiscuous, and it transpires that the diary belonged to a former nurse called Lastri (Lia Waode) who was murdered by her boyfriend Doctor Herman (Framly L-Men) when she discovered him in bed with another woman. Herman buried her in the wall of the room, and she seeks her revenge by killing others who are promiscuous. When an "M" appears and Mike is killed, Silla confesses their affair to Vira but she is regardless killed by the Crawling Nurse. Just before Silla's death, she screams at the Crawling Nurse: "I regret it. I promise I will never do such a stupid thing again."[61] As Vira packs to return home at the end of the film, the final scene shows a "V" appearing in the diary: the implication is that Vira too will be killed by the ghost because she had pre-marital sex with Mike.[62] Victims are still primarily women and Indonesian horror continues to grapple with the problematic sexuality of women in that specific society, often reiterating conservative codes of sexual morality.

Teenage protagonists are common in the horror genre, and in the case of the Indonesian horror film allows an exploration of the tensions between traditional superstition and secularized urban culture. Post-1998 Indonesian horror presents contemporary youth as having little time for either religion or supernatural beliefs. This is illustrated in *Pocong 2* (Rudi Soedjarwo, 2006), when a young university teacher Maya (Revalina S. Temat) agrees to visit a *dukun* when her younger sister Andin (Risty Tagor) complains about being haunted by ghosts. Initially skeptical of the *dukun* and the existence of ghosts, the *dukun* gives Maya the ability to see the parallel supernatural world, revealing to her that there are ghosts everywhere. Maya is so shocked that her modern-secular worldview is overturned completely. The ghosts she had associated with pre-modern or rural thinking now co-exist with her. Young secular protagonists thus undergo a shift in perception and belief from non-believers to believers, as what was merely rumor or hearsay turns out to be very real with very real consequences. In *Pocong 2*, both sisters believed they had moved into a modern apartment block but at the end of the film they find that the apartment

60. Whilst the Crawling Nurse ghost is a new ghost in Indonesian horror, she is still primarily an avenging spirit in the vein of the *kuntilanak*.
61. "Aku menyesal. Aku janji kejadian bodoh itu nggak pernah aku ulangi lagi."
62. Films from MD Pictures, from what I have seen, are the most moralistic in this regard. Generally, however, horror films feature young couples or mixed groups as their protagonists, combining sexual adventurousness with haunting.

block was illusory, bringing into question their perception of urban infrastructure and the histories buried beneath.

Older directors have had to adopt these narrative conventions, as in 1980s director Irwan Siregar's *Rumah Pondok Indah* (*The House in Pondok Indah*, 2006). In this film, a mother (Chintami Atmanegara) and her two children Elsie (Asha Shara) and Ian (Ricky Harun) rent a cheap house in Pondok Indah, and discover it is haunted. Unbeknownst to them, the landlord Tio (Arswendi Nasution), a sculptor, had killed his girlfriend Maya (Amelia) in the house and encased her body in a statue. Elsie and Ian are haunted by a ghost and discover the truth about the statue. Seeking her revenge, Maya's ghost possesses Elsie and confronts Tio when he arrives at the house. When Maya attempts to kill Tio, she is stopped by a female *dukun* who succeeds in forcing Maya's ghost out of Elsie's body. Maya's ghost possesses Tio, forcing him to reveal Maya's corpse in the statue. The film ends with the arrival of the police and Maya's spirit shooting off into the night.

Rumah Pondok Indah contains many of the features of contemporary Indonesian horror: use of urban legends to anchor the story in "reality," teenage protagonists, a revenge narrative, but most importantly a distinction between those who kill the woman who becomes the ghost and those who discover and disturb her. These give the Indonesian horror its distinguishing characteristics and provide commonality across the current iteration of horror in Indonesia. At the same time, these films draw on global codes and conventions of the genre, indicating an integration with a globalized repository of images and styles. Indonesian horror films, following Neale's definition of genre, thus repeat global conventions but provide difference in the specifics of the Indonesian content. It marks the consolidation of the Indonesian horror film as a stable and identifiable genre and its entry into mainstream pop culture.

Disturbing Teenagers

Almost all post-1998 Indonesian horror films combine two character types: a dormant *kuntilanak* who is awakened and driven by a modus operandi of revenge, and intruding teenagers who are haunted by the ghost. The *kuntilanak* is connected to the teenagers through a disturbance. When teenagers arrive in a particular place, their presence disturbs the dormant ghost causing her to manifest. Although she is an avenging spirit, she rarely, if ever, comes into being because of something the teenagers have done, but is the product of a violent crime committed in the past. Once disturbed, the ghost haunts and oftentimes kills the teenagers, prompting them to investigate. The film narrative follows the teenagers as they solve the mystery before some kind of revelation at the end, although not always leading to resolution.

Post-1998 horror films are characterized by a temporal separation between the original violent incident and the apparition of the ghost. This was first seen in

Jelangkung and has continued in almost every horror film made since. Although such temporal gaps are seen in horror films from other countries such as American stalker films of the 1970s and early 1980s,[63] in Indonesian films the gap calls back to a specific period in Indonesian history. With few exceptions,[64] the original violent act occurs sometime during the New Order, between 1965 and 1998. In *Jelangkung*, viewers are told the original killing happened in 1938; in *Suster Ngesot*, the original murder happens "twenty years ago."[65] *Malam Jumat Kliwon* (*Ominous Friday Night*, Koya Pagayo, 2007) tells that in 1990 a female *dukun* was attacked by a mob,[66] and when taken to hospital, she killed the medical staff forcing the hospital's closure. Almost two decades later, teenagers rediscover the abandoned hospital, disturb the ghost, and fall victim to her wrath. The arrival and incursion of the teenagers causes the dormant ghost to manifest itself. To paraphrase Robin Wood, the repressed makes a return. Acts of violence are thus primarily committed in the past, but the resultant ghost is only resurrected in the present. Whilst horror films are thus ostensibly about a group of teenagers encountering and dealing with a ghost, the encounter and the ghosts' revenge narrative are framed crucially and often explicitly across both the New Order and post–New Order periods.

The original violent incident is usually one of two types. The first caused by a mob of some description, seeking to destroy the evil that lurks in their community or institution. For the villagers of Angkerbatu in *Jelangkung*, this is a little boy; for the villagers in *Malam Jumat Kliwon*, she is a practitioner of black magic; in *Bangsal 13* (*Ward 13*, Ody C Harahap, 2004) she is a nurse who has been euthanizing patients. These figures threaten peace and order and need to be purged from the community. The second type of violence involves crimes of passion committed against a female victim, typically a murder or suicide linked to the status of her virginity, pregnancy, abortion or unrequited love. In both cases, not only is the victim buried "incorrectly" (the corpse is not given the proper funeral rites and her spirit remains in limbo), she is buried with no means of escape in a wall, under the floor, encased in a statue, chained in a basement, or locked in an abandoned building. Unable to seek her revenge at the time she was alive, she lies dormant until present-day teenagers disturb her, thereby giving her an opportunity to escape and fulfil her vengeance.

Not only is the separation temporal, but it marks qualitative differences between today's youth and the social conditions of the past. They are a generation separated from life under the New Order and live in a very different era marked by a new set of social and cultural concerns such as consumerism and hedonism. Contemporary

63. Vera Dika, *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990).
64. Exceptions include *Jelangkung* and *Lawang Sewu* (*Thousand Doors*, Arie Azis, 2007). *Lawang Sewu* is set in an old Dutch-era building in Semarang with ghosts the product of Japanese wartime torture.
65. Almost all contemporary horror films have this temporal gap. I have only included a few examples here. Almost all of them refer to events before 1998.
66. It is referred to as Pembantain Dukun Santet (Eradication of Black Magic Dukun) and is a reference to the real killings of witches by local mobs in Java in the early 1990s.

youth want to enjoy themselves, remaining ignorant of local folklore and mysticism and what happened in preceding decades. Ghosts prompt them to investigate what came before them. As Alice (Joanna Alexandra) says to her friend in *Lewat Tengah Malam* (*Past Midnight*, Koya Pagayo, 2007) in a moment of realization: "The ghost is trying to tell us something."[67] In *Ada Hantu Di Sekolah* (*There's a Ghost in the School*, Koya Pagayo, 2004) a group of school students inadvertently break a floor tile in the school library, releasing the ghost it conceals. Haunted by the ghost, they try and find its provenance and discover in the school's records that their teacher was a former pupil and that he had buried his girlfriend in the school library. She died by suicide after she became pregnant. In the final scene, her ghost confronts the teacher, admonishes and kills him, avenging herself at the same time. The mystery of the ghost is thus solved, and the ghost and spirit of the teacher evaporate into the air. Despite being the obvious protagonists of the story, their story is subordinated to the ghost herself as she seeks revenge for what happened to her in the past.

The inquisitive youth are hindered while investigating and solving that ghost's provenance by signs that read "*Dilarang Masuk*" (Entry Forbidden) outside the village of Angkerbatu in *Jelangkung*, to characters who block their progress. It is usually those in power or authority figures who seek to thwart inquiries into the ghost, either because they are implicated or know the true story. In *Bangsal 13*, a rookie doctor (Andika) unlocks the unused Ward 13 to house three young women who are injured after a late-night car crash. The next day, the head doctor (Erika H.) finds out that the doctor had opened Ward 13 and reprimands him. She knows why Ward 13 is off-limits and the secret it contains.[68] In *Beranak Dalam Kubur* (*Birth in the Grave*, Adji Saputra and Freddy Lingga, 2007)[69] the following exchange takes place between medical student Jess (Aditya Putri) and a hospital guard (Prapto Pempek):

> Jess: Sir, what is it that you are trying to conceal from me? I only want to know, what is in that room? Why is the corpse in that room?
>
> Guard: You are not allowed to enter the morgue room again. Do you understand?
>
> Jess: Just so you know, ever since my friends and I entered that room, we have not been at ease. A female ghost is terrorizing us. And I only want to look and go in.

67. "Hantu, kayaknya menyampaiin sesuatu."
68. A former nurse at the hospital was killed by an angry mob after they found out she was euthanizing patients at the hospital. They locked her in the cellar where she died. The ward was then locked after her ghost appeared and started killing patients.
69. Note, although it shares the same title as the 1972 film, it is not a remake. The film is about a group of medical students who discover a strange corpse in the hospital. The corpse is of a pregnant girl Jasmine who died after her boyfriend murdered her. She comes back from the grave to seek her revenge on him. The curiosity of the young Jess and her friends places them in direct conflict with those in power who work to maintain the artifice of normality. Generational power structures are inverted as the youth challenge their elders in their pursuit of the truth.

> Guard: The identity of the woman's corpse is unknown, and I was forced to lock her in the morgue room because she is the harbinger of disaster.[70]

These authority figures try to keep a lid on the secrets of the institution, preferring to keep what happened in the past locked and buried, lest they open the possibility for the ghost to emerge and bring disaster.

Alongside inquisitive teenagers and implicated adults, another set of characters interact with ghosts and are comfortable with the supernatural. These tend to be older characters, often in traditional dress or in occupations such as cleaner or caretaker. An old lady living in the cemetery in *Hantu Jeruk Perut* warns the teenagers by saying, "Don't come to this cemetery at night, it's not good. If you don't have a reason to be here, better you all leave."[71] The old caretaker at the hospital of *Bangsal 13* (Marno Karso) knows that the Ward is haunted and dutifully places a bowl of offerings outside the door to keep the hospital safe. This bowl is knocked over when Ward 13 is opened to house the young women. The caretaker in the school of *Hantu Bangku Kosong* even talks to the ghosts. For these characters, ghosts are a part of life, to be neither despised or feared, but, rather, accepted and managed. They contrast with the youth who are ignorant but inquisitive, and the adults or authority figures who tend to be cautious and implicated. It is as if the old people are living with the ghosts, managing them, but powerless to release them. They are like the ordinary citizens of the New Order who had to live with the knowledge of what had happened.

Not only is there a temporal difference between those who caused the ghost and those who disturb it, generational power structures are inverted as youth challenge their elders in their pursuit of the truth. This is best represented in the *Kuntilanak* trilogy (Rizal Mantovani, 2006; 2007; 2008), where a young woman Sam (Julie Estelle) gains the ability to summon a *kuntilanak* by singing a haunting cadence. Her newfound power threatens the aristocratic Mangkujiwo family who for generations have used the *kuntilanak* to further their business ambitions. By harnessing the power of the *kuntilanak*, Sam challenges and ultimately brings down the family. Here youth are a direct challenge to the established elite in Indonesia because they have the potential to take control of the "ghost" and turn it against those who had used it accumulate wealth and power. As contemporary youth come to understand that the ghosts represent fear and violence, they become a threat to established structures of power and the manipulations of history that underpin that power.

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70. "Pak, apa sih bapak coba tutup-tutupin dari saya? Saya hanya ingin tahu Pak, ada apa dengan kamar itu? Kenapa mayat ada di dalam ruang itu pak?" "Kamu tidak boleh masuk-masuk kamar mayat-mayat itu lagi. Ngerti?" "Asal bapak tahu aja ya, setelah saya dan teman-teman saya masuk ruang itu, itu kami jadi nggak tenang pak. Kami itu diteror sama hantu perempuan. Dan saya hanya ingin lihat dan masuk pak." . . . "Mayat wanita tidak jelas identitasnya itu terpaksa saya terkunci dalam kamar mayat ini, karena dia membawa petaka."
71. "Jangan main ke kuburan ini malam ndak baik. Kalau kalian nggak ada urusan, lebih baik kalian pergi dari sini."

According to contemporary Indonesian horror films, unresolved past violence can reemerge at any time with the potential to cause even greater destruction and instability to the fabric of Indonesian society. It exemplifies what Robin Wood means by the "return of the repressed" as long buried forces come back as monsters to haunt the present. When Franco Moretti says that ghosts can be read as "metaphors" for the unconscious fears of a society,[72] Lowenstein argues that horror films "generate shock as a means of blasting open the continuum of history" so that "the oppressed past no longer languishes unrecognized."[73] Post-1998 horror films allegorize an unease with events of the past which could at any time reemerge to trouble the present. Trencansky argues that in the American horror film, it is possible to describe the monster as "both murdered and victim, the exiled source of rebellion against society and simultaneously the product of that society's repression."[74] Indonesian ghosts thus represent what was repressed during the New Order—women, radical ideologies, communism, deviance—killed, buried, and silenced, but never fully eradicated. Using the established conventions of the genre, with the *kuntilanak* ghost as its stage, contemporary Indonesian horror films allegorize the residual trauma of historical violence and the potential for its return.

Opening Old Wounds

If in the majority of cases, new horror films are expressing an unconscious collective trauma about unresolved violence of the past, some young filmmakers have used horror to explicitly identify specific horror-inducing historical events. Director Hanung Bramantyo with scriptwriter Ginatri S. Noer reference communism and the events of 1965 in their films *Lentera Merah* (*The Red Lantern*, 2006) and *Legenda Sundel Bolong* (*The Legend of Sundel Bolong*, 2007).[75] In *Lentera Merah*, the ghost is of a journalist from the campus newspaper *Lentera Merah* (Red Lantern) killed by her colleagues in 1965 for her leftist views.[76] She returns to haunt the editorial committee in 2005. It so happens that the 1965 editorial committee's children are now the 2005 editors. Revenge for a killing in 1965 takes forty years to be enacted, and it is the children of the original perpetrators who experience the ghost's retribution and who must investigate and placate the ghost that haunts the newspaper and its

72. Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 105.
73. Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation*, 14.
74. Sarah Trencansky, "Final Girls and Terrible Youth: Transgression in 1980s Slasher Horror," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 29, no. 2 (2001): 70.
75. Bramantyo's earlier short works *Tlutur* (1998) and *Topeng Kekasih* (The Beloved Mask, 2000) both reference the violence of 1965–1966. In *Topeng Kekasih*, this violence is shown to have inter-generational effects as the troubled young male protagonist witnesses his mother being abused by her father.
76. Red Lantern is also a reference to the book *Di Bawah Lentera Merah* by Soe Hok Gie written in 1964 but only published in 1990. The book discusses the emergence of people's political movements in the Dutch East Indies, primarily the Syarikat Islam (Islamic Union) in Semarang from 1917 to 1920, leading to the formation of the Indonesian Communist Party in 1920.

Figure 3.2: A police officer marks the "65" in blood found beneath the dead body of Wulan (Firinia) in *Lentera Merah* (*Red Lantern*, Hanung Bramantyo, 2006). Image courtesy of Rapi Films.

editorial team. The references to Indonesian history are obvious, especially the film's tagline "*Kebenaran Harus Terungkap*" ("The Truth Must Be Told"). As evidence of the continuing sensitivity of 1965, the LSF made a number of cuts to the film to remove some of the more direct references to communism.[77]

Lentera Merah opens with the 2005 editorial team selecting new editors for the following year and subjecting them to an initiation process. Amongst the hopefuls is the mysterious Risa (Laudya Cynthia Bella). During her trial period, Risa exposes the plagiarism of Wulan (Firina), one of the current editors. Later that night Wulan is found dead and beside her body, written in blood, is the numeral "65." Later, during the initiation night, other members of the 2005 committee are discovered killed in strange circumstances, all accompanied by "65" written in blood near their corpses. Iqbal (Dimas Beck), one of the new editorial hopefuls, investigates the mysterious deaths by looking at the magazine's archive and discovers that Risa was a member of the 1965 committee who mysteriously disappeared. In investigating her disappearance, they find she was murdered by her fellow committee members for writing a pro-communist article and was buried in the wall of the Lentera Merah office. It is revealed that Risa's colleagues from 1965 are the parents of the 2005 committee. In the closing scenes, Iqbal's father (Yusef Muldiyana), also one of the original committee members from 1965, tells his son "Now you know right, that

77. Scenes censored included one with the song "Genjer-Genjer" playing. This used to be the 'PKI song' in the 1950s and 1960s. Any mention of 'communism' had to be edited out and was replaced by 'kaum kiri' (leftists).

behind the LM motto of 'always side with the truth,' a great lie was hidden."[78] The film is asking the viewers to reconsider the "truth" they have been told about 1965.

Rather than having contemporary youth as its main characters, *Legenda Sundel Bolong* is a historical horror film set in 1965 that does not use the temporal dualism common to post-1998 Indonesian horror. Recalling the 1981 film *Sundel Bolong* through its title, *Legenda Sundel Bolong* takes place in two small villages in Java in the 1960s where there are growing reports of ghostly sightings. One village is dominated by poor left-leaning workers and the other by more devout Muslims. Standing above both villages is the wealthy and powerful landlord Danapati (Tio Pakusadewo). Danapati harbors a dark secret—his mother had subjected him to abuse as a child and in a fit of revenge one day, he took a gun and shot her—which makes him a cruel and hot-headed adult. As an adult, Danapati is an exploitative plantation owner with a penchant for kidnapping young women from his plantations to fulfil his sadistic and murderous desires. These female victims become ghosts who wander around the two nearby villages.

When a *Sundel Bolong* ghost begins to wreak havoc on these villages by killing men one by one, mobs of men from both villages band together seeking retribution. Members from the Muslim village discover a sickle near a victim's body, proclaiming it as proof that the leftists from the other village are responsible. Their leader, the *ustadz*, leads them into confrontation shouting:

> Brothers in faith and piety. Today we know who our enemies are and who are our friends. Leftists are cursed by god and those we must destroy. God is great. We must oppose false belief![79]

Conversely, the villagers from the leftist village are led into battle by their leader who shouts:

> Brothers we have to resist. We have rights. We don't want to be oppressed forever. We don't want to be victims anymore. Enough. Let's just kill them. We'll kill them all![80]

The two groups march to confront each other in the tea plantation owned by Danapati and attack each other, until no one remains standing. Here the implication is that the inter-village violence between Muslims and leftists, is in fact triggered by the immoral acts of the local capitalist Danapati who exploits both groups. Acts of horizontal mob violence between those identifying with Islam and those with the political left are easily triggered by misunderstanding and a desire for revenge. This recalls the introductory text that appears over the film's opening credits:

78. "Sekarang kamu tahu kan, bahwa di balik moto LM yang selalu berpihak pada kebenaran ternyata ada kebohongan besar disembunyikan."
79. "Saudara-saudara seiman dan setakwa. Hari ini kita sudah tahu siapa lawan siapa kawan. Kaum kiri adalah laknatullah yang harus kita musnahkan. Allahu Akbar-Allahu Akbar. Kebathilan harus kita lawan!"
80. "Saudara-saudara kita harus melawan. Kita mempunyai hak. Kita tidak mau ditindas terus. Kita sudah tidak mau ada korban lagi. Sudah cukup. Kita bunuh saja. Kita bunuh semuanya!"

> This happened 4 decades ago.
>
> Those who are good became evil. The evil became good.
>
> In the area of Sindangsari, on the border of Central Java and West Java, people easily abused others.
>
> Because of the similarity they all shared they all felt they were VICTIMISED. ALL OF THEM ONLY WANTED RETRIBUTION.[81]

Although non-specific in its language, the opening text implies that the political tensions and subsequent violence of 1965–1966 were based on an ignorance of the true causes of oppression and exploitation. The film suggests that the actions of an immoral and rapacious elite provoked conflict between otherwise harmonious groups in Indonesian society during the 1960s.

Of course, neither film is historically accurate and takes significant artistic license with the events of 1965–1966. For critic Eric Sasono,[82] *Lentera Merah* misrepresents the real details, and does not present a wholly convincing portrayal of the events of 1965. Whilst Risa is killed in June 1965, the mass killings of 1965–1966 did not begin until after the abortive coup of September 30, 1965, with most of the killing occurring in 1966.[83] Sasono says that although there was agitation on the campuses, reflective of the politics of the 1960s, such an incident was not likely to have occurred. Yet for filmmakers like Bramantyo, historical accuracy is not his primary concern, rather horror enables him to explore what is repressed in society:

> For me, the most horrific situation in Indonesia are the years of 1965. Until today, this situation is still terrifying. It happened when the film [*Legenda Sundel Bolong*] was to be released, the censors were already on hold. The producer got paranoid which almost resulted in him cutting the film even more. The producer was worried after the experience of *Lentera Merah* when a group proclaiming themselves as 'Muslim' arrived at Indosiar [TV station] and asked them not to screen *Lentera Merah* because of the scenes with the PKI. That is horror for me. Like the living dead that scare everyone, the story of 1965 still haunts us.[84]

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81. Original reads: "Ini kejadian 4 dasawarsa yang lalu. Yang baik sebenarnya jahat. Yang jahat menjadi baik. Di wilayah kecamatan Sindangsari, perbatasan Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Barat orang dengan mudah melanggar orang lainnya. Karena ada kesamaan dalam diri mereka semua merasa menjadi KORBAN. SEMUA ORANG HANYA INGINKAN PEMBALASAN."
82. Eric Sasono, "Lentera Merah: Gagal Jadi Penerang," On Whatever, 2006. http://ericsasono.multiply.com/reviews/item/8.
83. M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia, Since c.1200* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
84. "Bagi saya, situasi paling Horor di Indonesia adalah tahun-tahun 1965. Sampai dengan hari ini, situasi itu masih menjadi teror. Terbukti ketika film ini hendak dirilis, pihak sensor sudah menunggu. Producer menjadi paranoid yang nyaris membuat film ini banyak di potong. Producer merasa khawatir oleh pengalaman Lentera Merah yang tiba-tiba di minta oleh sekelompok komunitas yang menamai dirinya 'Muslim' mendatangi stasiun TV Indosiar, meminta pihak TV tidak menayangkan kembali Lentera Merah karena memuat adegan PKI di dalamnya. Itulah Horor buat saya. Seperti mayat hidup yang menakutkan setiap orang, cerita 65 masih menghantui kita." Hanung Bramantyo, "Sundel Bolong," Jagad Pakeliran. http://hanungbramantyo.multiply.com/journal/item/5/SUNDEL_BOLONG.

Both *Lentera Merah* and *Legenda Sundel Bolong* are offering a counter-narrative to a period of history already clouded by systematic rewriting by state agencies. By drawing explicit links to 1965–1966, Bramantyo's two horror films encountered resistance from the censors and conservative groups as a result, but like all the other horror films links the appearance of the ghost to violent episodes connected to the rise and reign of the New Order regime.

Not Yet Buried

For young audiences and filmmakers of the post-1998 era, the events of 1965–1966 happened in the past, often before they were born, whereas the violent events of May 1998 were much more immediate and were experienced in the same temporality. May 1998 too has become the subject of filmic representations, leading to the only banning of a locally-made feature film after 1998. The end of the New Order, like its beginning, was marked by violence. Yet the four days of rioting, looting, and violence in North Jakarta and other cities from May 12–15, 1998 stand out from this period for their brutality and systematic targeting of the ethnic Chinese.[85] Whilst Indonesian history is replete with incidents where the Chinese have been singled out for attack,[86] the events of May 1998 were particularly shocking for the use of sexual violence and the involvement of military instigators.[87] The May 1998 events represented a descent into barbarism that many had thought impossible, even in the lawless and chaotic months leading up to Suharto's resignation. Many ethnic Chinese left Indonesia, or entrenched themselves further in high security enclaves, unable to understand why they were being targeted. Whilst the riots of May 1998 ended as suddenly as they had begun and life returned to a semblance of normality,[88] many still believe that the lack of justice and official investigation repeats an old pattern of not wanting to open old wounds.

Filmmakers in the following decade therefore attempted to use May 1998 as a backdrop to explore and memorialize the tragedy and trauma of that month. A short film anthology called *9808* was released in 2008 to mark the ten-year anniversary of the events, with films such as *Trip to the Wound* by prominent ethnic Chinese filmmaker Edwin, which is a particularly poignant mediation on the lingering scars on a Chinese Indonesian woman's body. Two feature films were also released in 2008: the tragedy *May* (Viva Westi, 2008) and Edwin's personal reflection on

85. James T. Siegel, "Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998, in Jakarta," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict R. O'G Anderson (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Studies Program, 2001), 90–123; Jemma Purdey, "Problematizing the Place of Victims in Reformasi Indonesia: A Contested Truth about the May 1998 Violence," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 4 (2002): 605–22.
86. Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia, 1996–1999* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).
87. Although never confirmed, it is widely believed that Prabowo Subianto was the mastermind behind the riots. He was married to Suharto's daughter Titiek, but had by 1998 fallen out of favor, and was passed over for promotion by General Wiranto.
88. Siegel, "Thoughts on the Violence."

being Chinese, *Babi Buta yang Ingin Terbang* (*Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly*, 2008). In *May*, the eponymous Chinese girl (Jenny Chang), is targeted in the riots after her boyfriend (Yama Carlos) fails to pick her up after work. Traumatized, she escapes overseas and eventually returns to Indonesia seeking resolution. Although timely and poignant, the film only had a short run recording an audience of fifty thousand people. *Babi Buta yang Ingin Terbang* never had a general cinema release, though it toured internationally to festivals and has been screened at private screenings in Indonesia. It situates the 1998 riots in a broader personal story of growing up Chinese in Indonesia through a series of often mystifying allegories of disenfranchisement, unbelonging, and stigma. One section shows the character Cahyono (Carlo Genta) editing a film about the riots as if he is trying to make sense of it in light of all that he has experienced as a Chinese Indonesian. Most recently *Di Balik 98* (*Behind 98*, Lukman Sardi, 2015) takes as its focus the student protests, and includes scenes of the riots and discusses the fate of one Chinese student. Set within the broader context of 1998, the film was well received recording an audience of over 680,000.

In separate analyses, Krishna Sen and Ariel Heryanto have found that whilst there has been a reappearance of the ethnic Chinese in some recent films such as *Ca Bau Kan* (*The Courtesan*, Nia Dinata, 2002), they also evoke prevailing ethnic stereotypes of the Chinese and, despite their best intentions, reaffirm rather than overcome these historical constructs.[89] Yet Sen and Heryanto overlook the appearance of ethnic Chinese in Indonesian horror.[90] Ethnic Chinese producer Leo Sutanto (Sinemart) uses the history of Chinese marginalization as the basis for his horror film *Di Sini Ada Setan* (*There is a Ghost Here*, Purnomo A. Chakil, 2004), which was seen by 600,000 people. *Di Sini Ada Setan* follows the standard post-1998 horror narrative as a group of Jakartan teenagers leave the city and travel to a lake for a holiday. The ghost that haunts and kills them however, is of a Chinese girl who was murdered in the past by her *pribumi* (indigenous) boyfriend. His parents had forbidden their relationship, and out of spite for her, the boyfriend made her confess her love for him before pushing her in the lake. Her revenge as a Chinese woman thus takes an added dimension in the context of ethnic relations in Indonesia and the historical persecution of the ethnic Chinese. In this case, horror provides a space to explore the historical trauma associated with being Chinese in Indonesia without resorting to stereotyped representations of Chineseness or reproducing the victim narrative of the ethnic Chinese experience in Indonesia.[91]

89. Krishna Sen, "'Chinese' Indonesians in National Cinema," in *Media and the Chinese Diaspora: Community, Communications and Commerce*, ed. Wanning Sun (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 119–36; Ariel Heryanto, "Citizenship and Indonesian Ethnic Chinese in Post-1998 Films," in *Popular Culture in Indonesia: Fluid Identities in Post-authoritarian Politics*, ed. Ariel Heryanto (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), 70–92.
90. The recent horror film *Cai Lan Gong* (David Poernomo, 2015) offers a Chinese origin story to *Jelangkung*.
91. Charlotte Setijadi, "Chineseness, Belonging and Cosmopolitan Subjectivities in Post-Suharto Independent Films," in *Chinese Indonesians Reassessed: History, Religion and Belonging*, ed. Siew-Min Sai and Chang-Yau Hoon (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

The violence of May 1998 and its relationship to Indonesia's Chinese population was however most clearly explored in *Dendam Pocong* (*Shrouded*, Rudi Soedjarwo, 2006). This film also showed the limits of representation, and it was the only locally made feature film to be banned since 1998. A *pocong* is a corpse wrapped in a white burial shroud, and when appearing as a ghost, is indicative of a recent burial. In *Dendam Pocong*, a *pocong* torments Wisnu Sugeng (Dwi Sasono), prompting him to seek revenge for the death of his parents and sister. They were brutally killed when the family's former employee, Rustam (Teuku Rifnu Wikana), led May 1998 rioters to their house as means to avenge himself. Rustam was angry because the Sugeng family accused him of stealing rice from the family business and fired him. Although the Sugeng family is not identified as being Chinese, the public secrets of the riots are that they targeted ethnic Chinese, and that they were probably orchestrated by factions within the military. The son, Wisnu Sugeng, survives the riot having witnessed his parents being killed and his sister raped. In the days after, he is tormented by a *pocong*, Wisnu exacts his revenge on Rustam and his family, subjecting them to the same violence that his own family encountered. The twist at the end comes when another of the Sugeng's family servants admits to her husband that she, not Rustam, had stolen the rice. Thus, the violence and revenge are not only over a petty amount of rice, but are also based on an initial misunderstanding.

In its depictions of the 1998 violence in Jakarta, the film veered too close to reality by linking a specific recent violent event with the apparition of the *pocong*, rather than decontextualizing the violence of the past. The violence was far too recent and far too visceral. Monty Tiwa and Rudi Soedjarwo were attempting to use horror as a means of exploring recent violent events, and scriptwriter Monty Tiwa says that he had

> a chest full of remorse out of the May 98 riot, which to me was and still is, really scary. That event was the real 'horror.' . . . And in the script, the message I was trying to convey is, we should not be afraid of ghosts. But human [*sic*] can be more frightening.[92]

To my knowledge, no other fictional film has been as explicit in reproducing an actual event of historical violence in Indonesia. In the sequel, *Pocong 2* (2006), only oblique references are made to the events of the first film as well as to the events of 1998. Arguably *Dendam Pocong* was banned precisely because it moved beyond allegory and into fictional reenactment, representing the specific historical violence of May 1998. Scriptwriter Monty Tiwa says that the censorship board believed the film would "bring back bad memories and . . . remind us of our 'nation's past wounds.'"[93] The wounds of 1998 are still too fresh.

92. Personal communication, December 12, 2009.
93. Personal communication, December 12, 2009.

Conclusion

This reorientation of Indonesian horror indicates a fundamental shift in who has the power and means of representation in post–New Order film. A young generation of filmmakers have reimagined horror, which only a decade earlier had been subject to New Order ideological control. Horror's return, and its evocation of historical trauma, indicates that a reappraisal of history is taking place, in a genre typically dismissed as inconsequential and purely commercial. The avenging spirit is now a means to conjure up the ghosts of the past to allow exploration and reflection, however allegorical, of the violence of history. For audiences, watching horror in the cinema is a "space to scream together" where they can seek communal catharsis for the residual trauma of the violent past that many Indonesians still experience.[94] Although the LSF continues to operate at the state's boundaries of permissible representation, there is a visible shift in the power of representation from the state to the people themselves.

More than a decade has passed since the end of the New Order giving time for other mechanisms of representation, memory, and deliberation to emerge. In horror films, the temporal gap—a common motif in horror generally, but of specific importance in post-1998 Indonesian horror—is no longer as salient as it once was. Watching Indonesian horror now, it is evident that many have closed the temporal gap, and instead returned to explicit violent incidents where vengeance is executed immediately. There are a number of potential reasons for this. First, the audience's need for catharsis has perhaps been partially fulfilled through horror, which has provided a shared space to scream and feel fear. Violence in horror does not necessarily resolve trauma, but rather serves to help audiences grapple with the experience of trauma more easily, and to process it. This is symptomatic of post–New Order politics. To read this through recent history would be to say that the trauma of the New Order has been sufficiently experienced and re-worked vicariously and viscerally through horror over the decade, and that other mechanisms of articulation have become available. Enough time has passed since 1998 that more and more people are ready to reopen the past to scrutiny in a way that is much more public. It was no doubt helped by the death of Suharto in January 2008, signaling the passing of an era.

Since 2008, there has also been more open and public discussion of the 1965–1966 period, signaling renewed efforts to address what happened forty years ago. Two recent publications have marked this new phase in historical reckoning. In August 2012, the National Commission for Human Rights (KOMNAS HAM) released *The Findings of the National Human Rights Commission on Human Rights Violations of 1965–66*. Taking four years to compile, the report concluded that "gross human rights violations" had indeed taken place. A year later in 2013, news magazine *Tempo* published a special edition called "Executioners' Confessions,"

94. "Ruang teriak bersama." Garin Nugroho quoted in Pattisina, "Selamat Datang."

with investigative reporting on the killings that occurred in 1965–1966. Both publications signaled a new openness and willingness to put the events of 1965–1966 into the public realm for debate.

Around the same time, filmmaker Joshua Oppenheimer premiered his documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012) which features the confessions and dramatizations of murders by a number of "executioners" from Medan in Sumatra. Gaining significant traction at international film festivals, *The Act of Killing* was also viewed in Indonesia at screenings and available for free download from Indonesian IP addresses.[95] *The Act of Killing* was followed in 2014 by its sequel *The Look of Silence* which features Adi, the brother of a victim, as he seeks out those who killed his brother. The film also meditates on the ongoing trauma that Adi's parents feel having lived their lives in constant fear of the military and local thugs. In particular, the films of Oppenheimer have reopened debate and interest in the events of 1965–1966 and their effect on the national consciousness and shown the ways in which it has operated to sustain a political system built on the constant threat of more violence. By avoiding victim exposition as found in the work *40 Years of Silence* (Robert Lemelson, 2009) for example, Oppenheimer directly confronts viewers with the boastful perpetrators and their legal immunity, making audiences question how the history of that period has been constructed and who the real perpetrators were.

As of 2018 the ground is beginning to shift on official investigation and recognition of the 1965–1966 murders. Hope has been placed in President Joko Widodo, elected in 2014 from a non-military background, that he would issue an official apology. Whilst this has not yet happened, his administration has been moving towards some kind of official investigation. This followed a people's commission in The Hague in late 2015 that brought international attention to Indonesia and to the testimony of many victims, including those exiled overseas. Widodo's Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs retired General, Luhut Pandjaitan, has however been adamant that "We must make peace with our past and it won't be perfect, but there is no thought that the government will apologize to anyone."[96] For the moment, official avenues of recourse remain thwarted by the political and military class, with an official apology still some way off. Even though the process of reconciliation has begun, the horror film will remain a potent site for representing the cultural legacy of trauma.

95. Ron Hatley, "Truth Takes a While, Justice Even Longer," *Inside Indonesia* 112, April–June, 2013. http://www.insideindonesia.org/truth-takes-a-while-justice-even-longer.

96. "Indonesia to Resolve 'Dark History' around Anti-communist Massacre," *The Straits Times*, April 18, 2016. http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-to-resolve-dark-history-around-anti-communist-massacre.

4
Marrying Islam and Pop Culture

> We are so accustomed to thinking . . . only of politicians using religion for political ends, that it is extremely hard for us to understand what politics might look like if we could see it through religious eyes, or in a religious perspective, and thus imagine the possibility of religious people using politics for religious ends.
>
> —Benedict Anderson[1]

Islamic Spectacles and Fantasies

In early 2008, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (*Verses of Love*, Hanung Bramantyo, 2008) realigned the growing film industry with mainstream pop culture in Indonesia. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* was a watershed moment for a new type of "Islamic pop culture" that had been gestating in the 1990s and which emerged in the liberalized climate of *reformasi*. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is a coming-of-age love story saturated with Islamic content. Attracting an audience of 3.8 million people, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* not only broke the long-standing box-office record set by *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love* in 2003 (a comparatively secular love story), it brought new audiences to the cinema, ignited debates around Islam and pop culture, and initiated a new subgenre of Islam-themed films. In the decade since 2008, more than thirty films have been produced that explicitly evoke Islam in their titles, marketing strategies, plots, characters, and themes. Even the previously secular *Get Married* series of romantic comedies explores themes of love, marriage, piety, and religious compatibility in its fifth iteration *Get Married 5 – 99% Muhrim* (*Get Married 5 – 99% Devout*, Fajar Bustomi, 2015). Together they make up an important part of what can now be identified in Indonesia as a new type of Islamic pop culture.

It seems obvious that the world's most populous Muslim nation—approximately 88 percent of Indonesia's population, or 205 million people—would make and consume "Islamic" films, however until 2008, there were very few. Most films are secular in content with little overt religiosity except for wedding, funeral, and

1. Benedict R. O'G Anderson, "Religion and Politics in Indonesia Since Independence," in *Religion and Social Ethos in Indonesia: Papers Given at the Annual Set of Public Lectures on Indonesia*, ed. Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, Mitsuo Nakamura, and Mohammad Slamet (Clayton: Monash University, 1977), 22.

occasional prayer scenes. Lead female characters rarely wore the *jilbab* (head scarf) and films that were explicitly Islamic were didactic in their *dakwah* (propagation, proselytization). Asrul Sani, who had directed perhaps Indonesia's first Islamic film in 1959 called *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tudjuh* (*A Strand of Hair Split into Seven*), criticized Islamic films in a 2000 interview for "trying to replace the role of the *kiai* [Islamic priest]."[2] Other films in the pop vein included those featuring *dangdut* star Rhoma Irama who was already using his music to proselytize to audiences. He moved into film in the late 1970s with titles such as *Perjuangan dan Doa* (*Struggle and Prayer*, Maman Firmansjah, 1980) and *Nada dan Dakwah* (*Notes and Dakwah*, Chaerul Umam, 1991). Films dramatizing the lives of the Wali Songo (nine prophets who brought Islam to Indonesia) ensured popular appeal by presenting the Wali as heroes with *sakti* (supernatural) abilities and superior fighting skills.

It was on television, however, that a new kind of Islamic content was developed and rendered mainstream. Since the 1960s, Islamic-themed programming had been specially broadcast during the fasting month of Ramadhan on state broadcaster TVRI, for informational rather than entertainment purposes. However, in the 1990s, with the market orientation of the private broadcasters, a new type of programming was developed that combined religious content with the popular entertainment form *sinetron*.[3] The first of these was the Multivision Plus–produced series *Doaku Harapanku* (*My Prayers My Hopes*, 1998) broadcast on RCTI. As Ishadi SK argues, this was when "the forces of the market started to determine the programs shown on television,"[4] meaning that stations pursued a dedicated audience to whom they could then sell to advertisers. Increasingly television stations expanded their Islamic offerings to include a range of different formats including tele-preachers offering advice and leading sermon, and broadened their broadcast time to all year round, and not just exclusively to the month of Ramadhan.

When Islamic programming came to the cinema, Indonesian filmmakers were responding to developments occurring more broadly across Indonesian society, especially amongst young, middle-class Muslims. The cinema offered a different kind of *dakwah* experience and enabled representation of new modes of faith and piety. As media scholar Inaya Rakhmani has argued in the case of Islamic television, this signals the way in which contemporary cinema is catering to an emerging segment of Indonesian consumers who identify through their faith and want to see it represented on screen. At the same time, new cinematic representations contribute to an emerging debate over what it means to be Muslim in contemporary Indonesia. New Islamic films break away from the previous *dakwah* tradition by replacing didactic Islam with lifestyle Islam. Rather than being rigid lessons

2. "Asrul Sani: Films Can Never Replace the Function of 'Kiais'," *Tempo*, November 12, 2000.
3. Inaya Rakhmani, "Mainstream Islam: Television Industry Practice and Trends in Indonesian Sinetron," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 42, no. 3–4 (2014): 435–66.
4. S. K. Ishadi, "Negotiating Mass Media Interests and Heterogeneous Muslim Audiences in the Contemporary Social-political Environmental of Indonesia," in *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*, ed. Andrew N. Weintraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 26.

in theology or preaching to their audience, new Islamic films dramatize a newly imagined Islamic life. As new symbols and modes of faith become more visible and mainstream, the media has become an important site for the representation and propagation of these ideas.

Fantasies of Faith

Ayat-Ayat Cinta is the story of Fahri (Fedi Nuril), a pious Indonesian student studying at Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He is handsome, courteous, dutiful, and dedicated to his studies, and as a result has become the subject of romantic interest by at least three young women, including his next-door neighbor Maria (Carissa Putri), a Coptic Christian. On a public train one day, Fahri defends an American journalist and her mother from an abusive Egyptian, who thinks they should not be sitting because they are *kafir* (nonbelievers). Fahri's defense of the women, in which he quotes scripture, attracts the attention of fellow passenger Aisha (Rianti Cartwright), a fully veiled German-Muslim woman. Until this point, Fahri has not been thinking about love, but something about Aisha prompts him to think about his obligations to marry. Later his *kyai* surprises him when he says that a young woman wants to propose marriage to him via *taaruf*, a more Islamic way of matchmaking.[5] Fahri initially vacillates, consults his friends and Islamic teacher who tell him that getting married is god's will. Fahri attends the *taaruf* meeting with her family and the woman is revealed to be Aisha. Fahri accepts her proposal and following their lavish wedding ceremony, Fahri sees his lifestyle change from relative simplicity to opulence as Aisha comes from a very rich family. Unbeknownst to Fahri, his marriage has upset his other secret admirers: heartbroken Maria falls into a coma after an accident; and Noura (Zaskia Adya Mecca), an Egyptian girl abused by her father, accuses Fahri of raping her. Fahri is arrested and put on trial, and only the evidence of the unconscious Maria can exonerate him. With permission from the court and his wife, Fahri visits and marries the unconscious Maria. At his kiss Maria wakes, and follows him to the court to testify for him. Together Maria, Aisha, and Fahri embark on a difficult polygamous married life. Maria progressively becomes sicker and as death nears, she pleads to Fahri to teach her how to pray in the Islamic way. While praying, Maria dies, leaving Aisha and Fahri to continue as a monogamous couple.

While the story is not entirely logical or believable, it is an intense two-hour long melodrama that director Rako Prijanto described as being like a "daydream."[6]

5. Taaruf is a particular Muslim form of engagement meaning "to get to know each other." It is "the introductory meeting before marriage during which mates get to know each other based on syari'ah ways, i.e., by avoiding all physical contact with non-mahram (male or female who could be married)." It is offered as a distinctively Islamic form of engagement as opposed to the more secular or Western "*pacaran*" or dating. See Ahmad-Norma Permata and Najib Kailani, "Islam and the 2009 Indonesian Elections, Political and Cultural Issues: The Case of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)," Occasional Paper (Bangkok: IRASEC, 2010), 83.
6. Personal interview, August 11, 2008.

Based on a best-selling novel by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, director Bramantyo with scriptwriters Salman Aristo and Ginatri S. Noer were praised for having so skillfully brought the popular novel to life on the screen.[7] Supposedly the producers had shown Bramantyo the successful Bollywood romance *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (*Something Happens*, Karan Johar, 1998) and told him to make *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* similar to it. The public response was overwhelming: even the Indonesian President admitted to crying while watching it.[8] *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*'s success was something of an accident for its producers: Bramantyo was known for making urban comedies and secular love stories, and the production company MD Pictures (a breakaway from Multivision Plus) had only just started producing feature films. Many in the film industry were of the opinion that a feature film prominently featuring Islam could not and would not be accepted by mainstream audiences, especially given the lackluster response to other Islam-themed films made since 1998. Feature film *Kiamat Sudah Dekat* (*The End Is Nigh*, Deddy Mizwar, 2003) bombed at the box-office, but found more success as a Ramadhan TV series on SCTV. There was a perception amongst film industry players that cinema audiences had become more secularized.[9] Commentators in the media noted that *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* brought a new audience to the cinema: old people, young women in *jilbab*, as well as students of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools).

Supporters of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* saw the film as a positive representation of Islam and showed how one could succeed living a pious life. Fahri embodied the idealized modern Indonesian Muslim: he was dedicated to his studies; he dutifully phoned his mother back in Indonesia; he was learned in and applied Islamic scripture and principles in his life; he represents a modern and reasoned form of Islam; and he was aspirational in his pursuit of love, work, and education. In the scene on the train, when Fahri stands up against the bigoted Egyptian by quoting scripture, his moral and intellectual superiority is established over that of the coarse and aggressive Arab. This prompts the American passenger (Tina), who is also a journalist, to seek Fahri's views on women in Islam. Fahri writes her a lengthy essay in English called "The Status of Women in Islam," in which he diligently defends women's rights and responsibilities according to Islam. She finds his answer illuminating and is visibly attracted to Fahri. Fahri not only defends Islam in the face of Western questioning, he makes Islam more desirable through his noble actions.

For politicians and religious leaders in Indonesia, this kind of positive representation played into their domestic and international agendas. Din Syamsudin, the leader of the mass Muslim organization Muhammadiyah, endorsed the film, thus substantiating its Islamic credibility. He said it promoted peace and love and could therefore counteract Geert Wilders' film *Fitna* (2008) that had gained

7. The novel had sold 750,000 copies and was in its 37th print run by the time the film was released. Lilian Budianto, "Islamic Romance Novels Make Splash," *The Jakarta Post*, March 2, 2008.
8. Desy Nurhayati, "SBY tearful, Kalla laughs," *The Jakarta Post*, March 31, 2008.
9. Salman Aristo, personal interview, December 8, 2008.

notoriety for its portrayal of Islam as a religion of hate and violence.[10] When the Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono organized a special screening for himself, his ministers, bureaucrats and foreign ambassadors, the film was further legitimized as one that "taught good values" and showed the humane side of Islam.[11] Representations of Islam in the film deviate substantially from the post-9/11 images of Islam in the global media which is dominated by fundamentalism and terrorism. Culture and Tourism Minister Jero Wacik praised the image of Islam in the movie, claiming it proved the Indonesian film industry was not only flourishing, but also that films were now "healthy"; proof, he said, of his own policies as Minister.[12] Islamic groups likewise claimed that the film vindicated Islam and was essential viewing for modern Muslims to consume and study.[13]

Notably, Islam is comparatively presented as both confident and morally superior in Coptic Christian Maria's conversion (*muallaf*) subplot. She wants to know more about Islam and its teachings because of the example set by Fahri. It is through her desire for him, and thus of Islam, that Fahri's piety is idealized as morally and religiously superior. Throughout the film, Maria is seen as experimenting with Islam by practicing veiling with a red headscarf, and learning verses of the Koran which she then proudly recites to an amazed Fahri.[14] When she dies, it is in the rapture of praying "in the Muslim way" under Fahri's tutelage, signaling her character's embrace of Islam. While the circumstances of her marriage and conversion are not problematized, it is logical within the narrative because she had desired Fahri and Islam *prior* to falling unconscious. Once Maria's conversion is complete and her function in the story has been fulfilled, she no longer serves any purpose and her character dies. Her last words, heard through voiceover, legitimize Fahri's marriage to Aisha: "Praise Allah, you have found your soulmate [*jodoh*], Fahri."[15]

Whilst previous discussions of the film focus on Fahri and Maria as the central characters of *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*,[16] Aisha is overlooked as the real driving character. Aisha is literally and figuratively veiled, but it is she who proposes to Fahri, marries him, and sees off the romantic competition from Maria, Noura, and Fahri's other admirers. She is alluring, mysterious and exotic, and her Turkish-German background means she is both modern and Western while remaining "authentically" Muslim. Her decision to marry Fahri is based on his reputation and values, not his wealth, whereas she is presented as rich and at times even spoiled. Aisha is initially jealous of Fahri's relationship with Maria and she has to come to terms with her husband's outgoing personality, but after she fights to have Fahri temporally freed

10. Gagah Wijoseno, "Din Syamsuddin: Lawan Fitna dengan *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*," *Detik News*, April 7, 2008.
11. Nurhayati, "SBY Tearful, Kalla Laughs."
12. See DVD Extras.
13. Amrih Widodo, "Writing for God: Piety and Consumption in Popular Islam," *Inside Indonesia* 93, 2008. http://www.insideindonesia.org/writing-for-god.
14. Intan Paramaditha, "Passing and Conversion Narratives: Ayat-Ayat Cinta and Muslim Performativity in Contemporary Indonesia," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 69–91.
15. The original dialogue in Indonesian is: "Insyah Allah kamu sudah mendapatkan jodoh kamu, Fahri."
16. Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*, 57–58.

Figure 4.1: The infamous on-screen kiss between Ayu Ratna and Fedi Nuril in *Garasi* (*Garage*, Agung Sentausa, 2006). Image courtesy of Miles Films.

she encourages him to marry Maria. During their period of polygamy, she gets so jealous that she leaves for a time, but she returns willing to reconcile with Maria for the good of the baby she now carries. Through her emotional struggles the film suggests that an Islamic woman, no matter how veiled, can wield considerable power and influence and can get the man she wants. To achieve this, she must remain *ikhlas* (sincere) in her love and trust that the pious man she has chosen will himself come back to her.

Soon after *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, a bigger and even more "Islamic" production was launched, culminating in the two-part *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (*When Love Exalts God*, Chaerul Umam, 2009) films. Based on another book by El Shirazy, it differs from *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* with its commitment to make the production as Islamic as possible. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* had been criticized for only being partly shot in Egypt (most of the film was shot in India and Surabaya) and for casting Fedi Nuril as Fahri who had a kissing scene in his previous film *Garasi* (*Garage*, Agung Sentausa, 2006). The *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* project began by holding a televised competition to cast the two lead actors, where groups of contestants competed in an array of Islamic credentials tests. Marketing for the film prominently displayed "Guaranteed to be 100% Egypt."[17] The production was also said to follow Islamic principles, with senior Islamic directors Imam Tantowi and Chaerul Umam following El Shirazy who "stipulated that the behavior of the crew must be pious outside and inside

17. "100% Jamin Mesir Asli."

the film. Not just pious in the film."[18] Produced by Sinemart (owned by ethnic Chinese producer Leo Sutanto), *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* cost a total of 40 billion rupiah (approx. USD 4 million) but failed to surpass *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* at the box office, recording audiences of 2.4 million for Part 1 and 1.2 million for Part 2. Yet its practice of "Islamizing" the production process for example through endorsements has become commonplace in subsequent film productions, enabling films to be marketed as authentically Muslim.[19]

Ketika Cinta Bertasbih is similarly the story of an Indonesian student—Azzam (Kholidi Asadil Alam)—studying at Al-Azhar University. He attracts the Westernized daughter of the Indonesian ambassador, but his true love interest is Anna Althafunnisa (Oki Setiana Dewi), the modest and veiled daughter of a respected Javanese *kyai*. The film narrates Azzam's struggle finding his way as a graduate of Al-Azhar, supporting his family through his *tempe* selling business, and finally marrying his *jodoh* (soulmate), Anna. To complicate matters, Anna has married Azzam's wealthy friend Furqan (Andi Arsyil Rahman) who it turns out has HIV from an earlier sexual relationship. They however divorce and Anna remains a virgin. Azzam meanwhile continues to work hard and realizing he too has to marry, accepts an offer from *kyai* Lufti (Deddy Mizwar) to marry a widow. The widow turns out to be Anna which enables Azzam to become the *kyai* at her father's *pesantren*. Anna is able to cultivate a successful book publishing and media career for herself that shows that she too can be independent and successful. Throughout, Azzam is guided by Islamic teachings and principles, and it is through his *ikhlas* (adherence, conviction) to Islamic faith that he is finally rewarded with a wife and the position of *kyai*, completing both his spiritual and material life.

These Islamic films began to imagine a new type of Islamic habitus for Indonesian Muslims that combined love and piety as a mutually reinforcing couplet. In this formulation, being a Muslim is not just believing in Islam, but being pious and applying Islamic principles in everyday life. This includes relatively new practices of *taaruf* rather than *berpacaran* (dating), not touching members of the opposite sex who are non-*mahram* (unrelated), and for women to wear the veil (*jilbab* or *hijab*). At the same time, material and social goals associated with modern life are also emphasized, including marriage and having children, the pursuit of education and a good job, and the attainment of material wealth such as a house and car. These are socially conservative gestures that are both an expression of piety but also of social conformity. Increasingly, they have become normalized for young Muslims wishing to express their Muslim identity in an increasingly consumer-orientated society. Islamic films map out fantasy scenarios for new forms of piety

18. "Kang Abik memberikan syarat, karakter orangnya harus saleh di luar dan dalam film. Bukan hanya saleh di dalam film saja. Saya mendukung keinginan itu." Chaerul Uman quoted in Haryadi, *Saat Bioskop*, 60.
19. This has become common in Islamic television programmes. See Inaya Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam in Indonesia Television, Identity, and the Middle Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54880-1.

that when practiced and followed produce rewards such as the "channeling of love and academic degrees."[20] They articulate a new type of middle class normativity that is religious but also deeply committed to the ideals of worldly success in terms of education, employment, family life, love, and marriage.

Pop Culture as *Dakwah*

As Islamic content and themes have become increasingly prominent in Indonesian pop culture, critics have wondered whether Islam is being commodified and used as a commercial strategy to sell more products. Kusuma notes there is "an emerging market for . . . Islamic values" including celebrity tele-preachers such as Aa Gym,[21] books and literature, television shows, syariah banking products, holidays (including pilgrimage packages), films, music, and fashion (especially *jilbab gaul* or "fashionable headscarves" for women).[22] Observers note that this Islamic marketplace correlates with economic development and the emergence of a Muslim middle class who consume as a form of religious expression.[23] Hasan argues that "Islam appears to be no longer simply a set of rituals, beliefs and doctrines, but it is also a symbolic commodity relevant to social class demands for lifestyle, modesty and enjoyment."[24] Islamic commodification remains contentious, especially amongst those who think that Islam should not be reduced to a commodity for consumption.[25] Kusuma thus suggests there is now a "battle between market forces and Islamic messages."[26]

In a recent study of Islamic television, Inaya Rakhmani suggests that Islam and pop culture should not be seen as mutually exclusive or even incommensurable, but rather intertwined.[27] She argues that since the 1990s, the emergence of a new middle class in Indonesia has aided the simultaneous rise of an Islamic economy of goods and services. Through their consumption practices, Islam has been undergoing a process she calls "mainstreaming" whereby Islamic religious ideas and values have moved out of the exclusive purview of religious authorities and figures and into

20. "Penyaluran hasrat cinta dan gelar kesarjanaan." Eric Sasono, "Islamic-themed Films in Contemporary Indonesia: Commodified Religion or Islamization?," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 48–68. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.48_1.
21. James B Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of AA Gym," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 95–112.
22. Veronica Kusuma, "When Religion Sells: How Cinema Is Used to Create Muslim Identities," *The Jakarta Post*, September 27, 2008.
23. Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam, Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), 15–39.
24. Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229–50.
25. Ekky Imanjaya, "'When Love Glorifies God,'" *Inside Indonesia* 97, 2009. http://www.insideindonesia.org/when-love-glorifies-god; Sasono, "Islamic-themed Films."
26. Kusuma, "When Religion Sells."
27. Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam*.

the market based economy. Rakhmani argues that this mainstreaming of Islamic content has proliferated a range of different voices and sources of religious authority akin to a market of consumer options. Islamic television programming is one such manifestation of this process and has seen many secular companies become avid producers of religious content. On television, images of piety have come to take on significant meaning through new Islamic formulations of variety shows, reality TV competitions, serialized dramas (*sinetron*), and self-help or discussion shows led by celebrity preachers.

The idea that consumer culture and Islam may in fact be compatible did not come from commercially minded television producers in the 1990s, but can be traced to the politics of a new piety movement in Indonesia called *Jemaah Tarbiyaah* (Educational Movement).[28] The progenitors of this new piety movement had been sent by the remnants of the Islamist Masyumi Party to attend Al-Azhar University in Egypt in the early 1970s.[29] In Egypt, they came into contact with the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwanul Muslimun) and Hasan Al-Banna in particular. Returning to Indonesia, and unable to direct their opposition to the Suharto regime through political activity, *Tarbiyaah* scholars went to university campuses to proselytize to students. In Bandung, they established the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council), and established courses and reading circles targeting *abangan* (nominally Muslim) students.[30] As DDII programs expanded to other campuses, the movement gained in power such that their activists held positions in student councils, and in many campuses their courses became compulsory for Muslim students. Their teachings proposed a cultural revolution by eschewing traditional and established forms of religious authority, to focus instead on developing the individual as a better Muslim, through actions, dress, and life choices. Theologically, this means following literal and fundamental interpretations of the Koran, and to the lives and teachings of the original followers of Islam (neo-Salafism).

Islam's revival in Indonesia, based around the individual and piety, connects developments in Indonesia with a revival in Islam globally. Roy designates this as the search for a global *ummah* (Islamic community) in which Muslims increasingly identify with a global, rather than local, Muslim fellowship.[31] Neo-Salafism, first propagated by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1930s, has become the ideological platform through which a revivalist Islam is imagined and propagated

28. Yon Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008). http://press.anu.edu.au?p=26191.
29. Masyumi was an Islamic party active in the 1950s and 1960s, banned by Soekarno in 1960. Like other Islamic parties at the time, Masyumi was stifled by the New Order.
30. Syamsul Bahri Andi Galigo, "Harakah Islamiah Dan Era Reformasi Indonesia," in *Dakwah Gerakan Islam Alaf Baru*, ed. Ahmad Redzuwan Mohd Yunus, Badlihisham Mohd Nasir, and Berhanundin Abdullah (Bangi Selangor: Jabatan Pengajian Dakwah dan Kepimpinan, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, UKM, 2000), 200. Abangan refers to the followers of Indonesian Islam who are more nominal and syncretic in their beliefs. See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960).
31. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

globally. Neo-Salafism, as the name suggests, is a return to a "pure Islam," stripped of its cultural and social baggage accumulated in Islam's history of adaptation to local cultures and conditions. In Indonesia, Islam is syncretic in form, mixing with Javanism, Hinduism and Buddhism,[32] even amongst the more orthodox Muhammadiyah followers.[33] Whereas Islam has typically adapted to particular societies and their cultures, neo-Salafism is orientated towards a global *ummah* based on universal Islamic principles, and is thus deterritorialized from the local and the particular. For neo-Salafism, globalization and pop culture are not a problem, the latter is an essential means by which their ideas can be propagated.

The *Tarbiyaah* movement has come to public prominence in the past decade following the end of the New Order, although they had been integral to the revival of Islam over the past two decades. *Tarbiyaah* adherents are perhaps best known through the political party PKS (Prosperous Justice Party, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera). In 2004, the party received just over 7 percent of the popular vote and went into coalition with the ruling Democratic Party during the term of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono from 2004 to 2014. PKS members were given ministerial posts including Tifatul Sembiring (Minister of Technology, 2009–2014), Adhyaksa Dault (Minister for Youth and Sport, 2004–2009), Anton Apriyantono (Minister for Agriculture, 2004–2009), Salim Segaf Al-Jufri (Minister of Social Affairs, 2009–2014), Suswono (Minister for Agriculture, 2009–2014), and Suharna Surapranata (Minister for Research and Technology, 2009–2011). Their entry into politics has been characterized by what Machmudi calls "purification and accommodation,"[34] which means that in trying to bring their reformist principles to politics, they have invariably had to negotiate and suppress some of their ambitions, notably in pushing for *syariah* law. Ultimately, their aim is to re-Islamize Indonesian society, but in becoming a formal political party in 1998, they have encountered the diverse reality of Indonesian society and become embroiled in the money politics and corruption that characterizes Indonesian political life.

As their political success has been compromised, the image of piety is maintained and even strengthened through the example set by PKS's women members who play an important role in embodying and propagating Muslim values. Rinaldo's work on the female members of PKS provides an insight into how expressions of Indonesian Islam are shifting away from ritual and dogma to practices and symbols of personal piety.[35] She argues that for PKS women, Islamic identity takes on the form of a consumption object, such that "particular pious practices among Indonesian Muslims are producing a new kind of middle class habitus that distinguishes women by class and approach to religion."[36] For Rinaldo, this form of

32. Geertz, *The Religion of Java*.
33. Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia*, 57–58.
34. Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia*, 217.
35. Rachel Rinaldo, "Muslim Women, Middle Class Habitus, and Modernity in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 2, no. 1 (2008): 23–39.
36. Rinaldo, "Muslim Women," 29.

piety also enables women to participate in the modern consumer economy so that they are "simultaneously producing modern selves."[37] Consumption typically associated with Westernization (and therefore to be avoided) is "Islamized" and made compatible with Islamic values. Pious women follow socially conservative values such as raising children, supporting their husbands, and upholding good Islamic households.[38]

While most attention has focused on the political aspirations and fortunes of the *Tarbiyaah* movement via their political party the PKS, it is in the cultural sphere that their ideas have found significant traction. Prominent writers of new Islamic fiction are influenced by *Tarbiyaah* and incorporate their teachings into their work.[39] Most prominent is Forum Lingkar Pena (FLP, Writing Circle Forum), a writers' network founded by "*tarbiyaah da'wa* activists" and sisters Asma Nadia and Helvy Tiana Rosa in 1991, with the aim of creating morally responsible (and thus Islamic) literature.[40] Rosa attempts to reengage with a young readership through her writing, offering "a ready-to-use manual drawing on Koran-based codes of conduct for everyday life."[41] How El Shirazy, also an FLP member, articulates his position in an interview is thus insightful:

> I don't categorize this novel [*Ayat-Ayat Cinta*] as Islamic literature. I only categorize this novel as a novel of spiritual development. But, readers continually categorize it as Islamic literature. . . . I don't see Islamic literature as having to feature a setting in the mosque, Mecca or Madinah. This is a viewpoint that needs to be debated.[42]

While El Shirazy denies the category of "Islamic literature" by calling his work "spiritual development," he shows how the emphasis is on the individual and on how to be a better, more pious, Muslim. His stories are embedded within an Islamic habitus in which everyday acts and symbols of piety are emphasized rather than formal acts of devotion.

New Indonesian Islamic media show the shift from religion to religiosity amongst middle class Muslims. To be a Muslim relies less on formal displays of religious observance to personalized faith and the realization of self through piety. New and powerful forms of morality are proposed seeking to offer new ways of behaving and principles for living.[43] *Tarbiyaah* is important because it structures the way in

37. Rinaldo, "Muslim Women," 38.
38. Tia Pamungkas, "The Dakwah Media in Post Suharto Indonesia from Politics of Identity to Popular Culture (The Case of Ummi)," (PhD diss., Humboldt University of Berlin, 2014).
39. Monika Arnez and Eva F. Nisa, "Dimensions of Morality: The Transnational Writers' Collective Forum Lingkar Pena," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 172 (2016): 449–78, doi: 10.1163/22134379-17204003.
40. Permata and Kailani, "Islam and the 2009 Indonesian Elections," 84.
41. Widodo, "Writing for God."
42. "Saya tak meletakkan novel itu sebagai sastera Islami. Saya hanya letakkan novel itu sebagai novel pembangun jiwa. Tapi, khalayak ramai kemudiannya meletakkan karya itu sebagai sastera Islam. . . . Saya tidak melihat Sastera Islam itu mestilah ciri-cirinya berlatarbelakangkan masjid, Makkah dan Madinah. Ini satu tanggapan yang mesti dibetulkan" El Shirazy quoted in Ali Bukhari Amir, "Habiburrahman El-Shirazy: AAC, penyebab dakwahnya lebih meluas," *Harakah Daily*, November 21, 2008.
43. Arnez and Nisa, "Dimensions of Morality," 466.

which Islam has been rearticulated and re-imagined in contemporary Indonesia for many young people, especially in the middle class who are avid consumers of pop culture. As the urban middle class define consumption patterns for the rest of the country, it is increasingly their values and ideals that shape how Islam is presented in Indonesian cinema. Here we see the emergence of a new consumer segment and a new audience for a new type of Islamic cinema.

Images of Piety

In a growing body of literature on the subject, films that incorporate Islamic symbols, icons and messages are referred to variously as *film Islami* (Islamic films), Islamic themed films, and *film religi* (religious films), amongst others. Alicia Izaharuddin offers the following definition: "films made for the purpose of *dakwah* through the display of diegetic and extra-diegetic audiovisual and commercial conventions that mark them as "Islamic" by filmmakers, critics, and audiences alike."[44] Whilst it is not my intention to quibble over terminology, what is common to *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and many of the Islamic-themed films after it, is that they offer images of piety as *dakwah*. They show how one can lead a life informed by Islamic principles in an age of rapidly changing norms, globalization, temptations, and desires. Through these images of piety, Islamic films show how an Islamic life brings stability, certainty, and reward. Scholars such as Fealy and Machmudi have noted the rise of new piety movements in Indonesia,[45] but it is in film we find piety represented most clearly as a way of life. Piety is not defined simply by a set of precepts and regulations, but is shown to be an aspirational choice that delivers real world rewards appropriate to this new sense of religiosity.

The blending of film fantasy with real-world piety is most evident in *Hijrah Cinta* (*Love Emigration*, Indra Gunawan, 2014), a biopic about popular Islamic preacher Jefri Al Buchori, known as Uje. When Uje died suddenly in 2013 following a motorcycle accident, thousands of people poured onto the streets to attend his funeral in a demonstration of his immense popularity and impact. Although he had been a minor *sinetron* actor in the 1990s, Uje rose to fame as a popular Islamic preacher after he appeared on the TV7 *dakwah* show *Salam Sahur* (*Dawn Greeting*, 2002), and subsequently contracted as its host. In 2004, he led the TPI show *Tausiah* (*Lessons*) and a number of episodes of *Kumis Remaja* (*Teenage Moustache*) on Sunday mornings. He was thus part of the new *dakwah* programming on Indonesian television that has proliferated since the early 2000s.[46] Similar to patterns developed in Islamic-themed television, *Hijrah Cinta* was produced by Raam Punjabi's Multivision Plus, who had pioneered much of the mainstreaming

44. Alicia Izharuddin, *Gender and Islam in Indonesian Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 40.
45. Fealy, "Consuming Islam"; Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia*.
46. Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam*.

Figure 4.2: News footage of Uje' funeral used at the end of *Hijrah Cinta* (*Love Emigration*, Indra Gunawan, 2014). Used courtesy of Kapan Lagi.

of Islamic television in the late 1990s.[47] Multivision Plus sought to capitalize on the popularity of Uje, and by reinforcing his message of piety in a commercial pop culture product, it earned the film over 710,000 viewers at the local box-office.

Hijrah Cinta traces Uje's journey of redemption by twinning love and piety as the foundations of his personal and spiritual transformation. Uje (Alfie Alfandy) is introduced as a failing *sinetron* actor whose drug addiction makes him increasingly paranoid and unreliable. When he meets Pipik (Revalina S. Temat) on location one day, he falls in love, and attempts to clean himself up so he can ask her out on a date. Knowing that she is religious, Uje sings her a sad verse of an Islamic prayer about *dosa* (sin) as they walk home together. She falls in love with him and they soon marry, but his addiction gets worse and she responds by becoming more religious, symbolized by her decision to wear the *jilbab*. Her faith gives her the strength to confront Uje and make him go cold-turkey, something his family had been unable to do. Now clean, Uje returns to his family's mosque where he is met with hostility, but he nevertheless leads the prayer and eventually becomes an *ustadz* (priest). When he begins preaching from the heart, confessing his own sins and telling people about his bad past, his popularity and congregation grows. By 2012, Uje is a famous tele-preacher, living in a big house with four children. The film dramatizes the motorcycle crash that took his life, followed by actual news footage of his funeral in Jakarta.

47. Gareth Barkin, "Producing Indonesia: The Derivation and Domestication of Commercial Television," (PhD diss., Washington University, 2004).

Hijrah Cinta piggybacks on Uje's fame, but the film emphasizes his transformation narrative which underpinned his return to Islamic faith with the support of his wife, Pipik, who plays an important role as the moral bedrock of his transformation, providing the love and trust that pulls him through his addiction, providing him with a family, and then supporting him in his career. Her faith is tested, but it becomes the source of her ability to be a faithful and supportive wife. Early in the film, he says to her, "the first time I saw you, I wanted to change."[48] Love built on a foundation of faith becomes the means by which success in life can be achieved. The final scene of the film emphasizes the link between love and faith in a flashback: the couple is on the beach, and after she puts a shawl over her head, he adjusts it like a *jilbab*, and then says to her, "Do you want to be the witness of my transformation?" She replies, "I do, for as long as it takes."[49] Life, as presented in these films, is full of tests from God and the message relayed is that a true believer will overcome hardship and struggle and be rewarded with a new set of aspirations that include love, marriage, family, and experience acceptance, reconciliation, and worldly success.

In keeping with the image of Uje as a preacher of the people, the film shows how anyone can be the beneficiary of faith's reward. Uje is humanized as a flawed individual, a model of how piety can transform a normal, even troubled, person into an inspiration for others. Likewise, Pipik is rewarded through her *ikhlas* (dedication) to her husband and faith. In recent Islamic films, piety is a project of the self, proposing a whole way of life. It is not enough to simply believe and engage in rituals such as prayer, but piety is a way of life that demands correct behavior, conviction, and aspiration. Piety is not just a path to redemption, but realizes a new self with career success, finding love, and forming a family. Piety helps individuals overcome doubt, sin, and bodily pleasures to offer deeper rewards of love and marriage. By providing a correct and moral way of living, piety offers a means of maintaining faith in the modern world. Rather than shunning consumer culture and a modern lifestyle, piety offers a means to balance a modern lifestyle with Islamic faith, showing how faith is the means to worldly success.

Discovering a World of Islam

Inaya Rakhmani argues that much of the new Islamic programming is aimed at a new pious middle class for whom Islam has become a consumption object.[50] One of the new manifestations of status for this middle class is overseas travel, which marks the individual as worldly and wealthy. For much of the New Order and even after *reformasi*, overseas travel was out of reach for many ordinary Indonesians due to cost and convoluted bureaucratic procedures required to get permission to leave the country. Overseas travel was largely limited to the very wealthy—mostly

48. "Waktu pertama kali lihat kamu, aku pengen berubah."
49. "Kamu mau, jadi saksi perubahan aku?" "Aku mau, sampai kapanpun."
50. Rakhmani, *Going Mainstream*.

ethnic Chinese—and to government servants and bureaucrats on official business. In the wake of *reformasi*, Indonesia's economic stabilization, and the emergence of cheaper air travel, the new middle class have pursued overseas travel to bolster their class credentials. The recent proliferation and popularity of travelogues written by Indonesians and social media postings is an indicator of the growing trend. Not surprisingly, a number of films explore overseas travel, including many recent Islamic-themed films.

In this section I discuss three recent Islamic films with overseas settings that are not Muslim or Muslim majority countries. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* were both set overseas, but in Egypt, which is considered Muslim and thus "safe" for Indonesian Muslims. More telling are the recent films that have explored the complications that Indonesian Muslims might face when they travel overseas to non-Muslim majority countries: *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (*99 Lights in the European Sky*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2013), *Haji Backpacker* (Danial Rifki, 2014), and *Assalamualaikum Beijing* (*Peace be Upon you Beijing*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2014). These three titles attracted significant audiences on their release (1,189,709, 375,799, and 560,465 viewers respectively). As Indonesian Muslim characters travel, their religion is foregrounded and becomes a prism through which they encounter foreign locations. In the process of realizing their middle-class status aspirations, they discover other Muslims and Islamic histories of which they were until then unaware, leading to an awareness of global Islam.

99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa is based on a non-fiction novel by former MetroTV journalist Hanum Salsabiela Rais and her husband Rangga Almahendra, which recalls their journey to Austria when Rangga received a postgraduate scholarship at the University of Vienna. Whilst Rangga (Abimana Aryasatya) adjusts to life in a European university, Hanum (Acha Septriasa) explores Vienna like a tourist but soon witnesses the fate of an unemployed veiled woman Fatma Pasha (Raline Shah)

Figure 4.3: Marion Latimer (Dewi Sandra) guides Hanum (Acha Septriasa) to understand the hidden Islamic meaning of Parisian urban planning in *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (*99 Lights in the European Sky*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2013). Image courtesy of Max Pictures.

who is turned away from a shop when she is looking for work. Hanum meets the veiled woman in her German class and learns that she is Turkish and descended from Kara Mustafa Pasha, the Ottoman general who led the failed siege of Vienna in 1683. Hanum develops a close friendship with Fatma and her daughter Ayse (Geccha Tavvara), who is bullied at school by her Austrian classmates for wearing the *hijab*. Similarly, most of Rangga's struggles are to do with his religion—such as struggling to find food that does not contain pork at a local café or protesting about an important qualifying test being scheduled on a Friday during prayer time. These experiences highlight the difficulties Muslims face in Europe, and the need for cross-cultural solidarity. For Rangga and Hanum, Islam becomes the method by which they interact with others.

One of the most revealing sequences in the film comes when Hanum travels to Paris to accompany Rangga who is attending an academic conference, and she spends time with Pasha's friend Marion Latimer (Dewi Sandra). Marion is French and works at the prestigious Arab World Institute; she has converted to Islam and now wears the *hijab*. She becomes Hanum's guide in Paris and reveals the secret Islamic meaning of iconic Parisian artefacts and architectural sites. At the Louvre, she shows Hanum the painting *Virgin and Child* (c. 1315–1320) by the Italian artist Ugolino di Nerio and claims that the script visible on Mary's veil says in Arabic "*La Ilaha Illallah*" (There is no god but Allah). Later, she takes Hanum to the top of the Arc de Triomphe and asks Hanum where she thinks the Champs-Élysées points to. Hanum struggles to imagine where, but, under Marion's encouragement, guesses that the avenue points to the Ka'bah in Mecca and is therefore a kind of *kiblat*. Marion claims that Napoléon built the Champs-Élysées because he was enthralled by Islam. In reality, none of Marion's claims are true—the script in the painting is pseudo-Kufic and has no meaning, while the Champs-Élysées neither points to Mecca nor was it constructed by Napoléon—but within the film, these claims construct an Islamic history of Europe purposively denied.

Like *Hijrah Cinta*, *Haji Backpacker* is ostensibly a story of redemption but one that takes place outside Indonesia. The central character Mada (Abimana Aryasatya) lives a hedonistic life in Bangkok, drinking and partying with Westerners. Mada's actions are driven by anger at Islam—he had invested his faith in the religion only to see his father die when he was a young boy. One night, Mada is forced to flee Bangkok into neighboring Vietnam where he murders a Thai gangster after a drunken altercation. From Vietnam, Mada escapes into Southern China where he is nursed back to health by a Chinese Muslim family. Through their care, they reintroduce him to Islam as the source of life's purpose, and he decides to embark on a personal pilgrimage to Mecca as a backpacker to rediscover his faith. Along the way, Mada encounters Muslims in each country he passes through who each provide him with both spiritual and material support. The journey is Mada's symbolic return to piety from a decadent, immoral life in which he had openly rejected his family and

Figure 4.4: Mada (Abimana Aryasatya, *seated*) reads the Koran under duress in *Haji Backpacker* (Danial Rifki, 2014). Image courtesy of Falcon Pictures.

Islam. *Haji Backpacker* implies that God guides, protects, and rewards his followers if they are *ikhlas* (sincere) in their faith.

The climax of the film comes when Mada is crossing Iran and the bus he is travelling on is hijacked by gun-wielding extremists. They single Mada out as a possible Israeli spy and subject him to questioning and torture to extract his identity. To prove he is a Muslim, Mada is instructed to recite a verse from the Koran. After performing the correct ablutions, Mada begins to recite in a beautifully melodious voice, proving under duress that he is true in his faith, and he is thus saved from probable execution. This signifies that Mada has now fully embraced Islam and placed his faith back in God, but it elides important ethical questions around the morality of extremism and the fate of others who might be non-Muslim. Nevertheless, for Mada the final hurdle is overcome, and the kidnapper assists Mada's passage to Saudi Arabia as a deckhand on a rich Saudi's boat. In Mecca, Mada becomes a pilgrim, reconciling himself with the memory of his father and family. *Haji Backpacker* shows piety is an individual project of the self in which having faith is the means to reconciliation, linking the individual to a larger community of Muslims across the world.

Islamic films place significant emphasis on women as the subjects of the new piety, and this is especially true of Asma (Revalina S. Temat), the main character of *Assalamualaikum Beijing*. Asma is a hard-working, beautiful, *jilbab*-wearing, Muslimah who takes a journalism job in Beijing after breaking up with her unfaithful fiancé in Jakarta. In China, she discovers not only a rich civilization, but also Chinese Muslims who become a particular focus of her newspaper column called "Assalamualaikum Beijing." On the day she visits an old Islamic area of Beijing, she is surprised by the appearance of her new Mandarin-speaking guide who introduces himself as Zhongwen (Morgan Oey) and who happens to be the beautiful young Chinese man she bumped into one day on the bus. Zhongwen is polite and

Figure 4.5: Asma (Revalina S. Temat) meets her guide and future husband Zhongwen (Morgan Oey) outside the Niujie Mosque in Beijing in *Assalamualaikum Beijing* (*Peace Be Upon You Beijing*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2014). Image courtesy of Max Pictures.

romantic and displays an unusually detailed knowledge of local Islam. As Asma begins to fall in love with him she realizes their love will be impossible since she is a Muslimah and he is a self-confessed agnostic. When Asma falls sick and has to be flown back to Jakarta for treatment, Zhongwen converts to Islam out of love. He travels to Jakarta to see Asma, and as Zhongwen prays in the corner of her hospital room, Asma wakes from her coma. Despite her illness, which renders her unable to speak coherently, Zhongwen commits to marry her and the two are united. They travel back to China where it is revealed that Zhongwen's foster parents are Chinese Muslims that Asma had previously interviewed for her column.

Asma, like Fahri in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, is an ambassador for Islam showing how piety makes a better and more attractive person. Asma says, "Love is Allah's greatest mercy to mankind,"[51] meaning love and faith are intimately tied together. Her commitment to Islamic principles combined with her outgoing and sweet personality have the ability to not only make an agnostic Chinese man fall in love with her, but also to convert him to Islam. Her illness is no impediment either, as he knows that her character and values, not her physical ability, are what attracted him to her. Through Asma, not only is a rich Islamic history discovered in a country like China, but also the possibility that a beautiful East Asian man (a fantasy love object for many young Indonesian women) is not entirely out of reach. Morgan Oey reprises this romantic role in *Jilbab Traveler: Love Sparks in Korea* (Guntur Soeharjanto, 2016), playing a Korean man rather than a Chinese man. In their examples, a host of possible problems, including cultural difference and physical illness, are transcended because a shared faith makes love not only possible but enduring.

51. "Cinta memang rahmat Allah yang paling besar bagi manusia."

As Muslim characters travel in recent films, they discover that their faith allows them to identify with the rich history of global Islam. Concerns that world travel could weaken the faith of Indonesia's Muslims are allayed by showing how they can always find communities of faith to identify with in a shared religious solidarity. As the three films above show, middle-class Muslims strong in their faith are able to travel and engage in the world in new ways that enable them to maintain or even strengthen their religion. These films mark a new development in the ways in which Indonesian Muslims see themselves engage with the world—increasingly as active participants, with purchasing power and economic status allowing them to be more than just tourists. They also show the further intertwining of consumer ambitions with Islamic piety that characterize the Indonesian middle class.

Polygamous Controversy

As Islamic values and principles gain greater exposure and expression in Indonesia's mainstream media, polygamy remains particularly contentious. According to the Surah An-Nisa (4:3) in the Koran, and based on the prophet Mohammad's own life, there is provision for a man to marry up to four wives. Proponents of polygamy read this as an endorsement of polygamy, and they suggest that laws or regulations that prevent a Muslim man from taking more than one wife go against the religion. The verse is, however, qualified since it proposes polygamy in the context of "orphans" and only if a husband can treat all of his wives fairly. For opponents of polygamy, the fairness qualification is highlighted to argue that in reality it is impossible to be fair and thus polygamy may be doctrinally sanctioned but should never be practiced.[52] The debate over polygamy in Indonesia has a long history—President Soekarno famously married eight times—and during the New Order civil servants were forbidden from taking more than one wife.[53] In 2006, polygamy was elevated to the level of national scandal when celebrity preacher Aa Gym, who had built himself a successful self-help and marketing empire based on Islamic teachings and values, fell from grace after taking a second wife.[54] For his disappointed followers, the issue was not about the rights and wrongs of polygamy per se, but rather that Aa Gym was seen to contradict his own teachings, thus damaging his "brand credibility."[55]

Polygamy is one of the fault lines present in Indonesian Islam alongside interfaith marriage, Syariah law, *muallaf* (converts), feminism and women's rights, clothing and the *hijab*, modernity, and love. For example, during the New Order school students were not allowed to wear the headscarf, until the ban was overturned in the

52. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, "Poligami, Monogami, dan Kontradiksi Modernitas," *IslamLib*, 2008. http://islamlib.com/id/artikel/poligami-monogami-dan-kontradiksi-modernitas/.
53. Anne Dickson, "This Woman Wants Polygamy," *Inside Indonesia* 90, 2007, www.insideindonesia.org/this-woman-wants-polygamy; Nina Nurmila, "Polygamy and Chickens," *Inside Indonesia* 83, 2005. http://www.insideindonesia.org/polygamy-and-chickens.
54. Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality."
55. Hoesterey, "Marketing Morality," 104.

early 1990s. Since the 2000s, wearing of the *jilbab* or *hijab* has become more prominent as more women see it as part of their religious obligations, and as a means to express piety and Islamic identity. When discussed, wearing the *jilbab* is described as a personal choice, and not as something one is forced or obligated to do.[56] This has also spawned the growth in fashionable *jilbab*, available in various styles and colors, and conversely a backlash from more conservative Muslims against what they perceive to be the profanation of a sacred religious symbol. Without any single ruling from a religious authority or enforced uniformity, various practices proliferate in a broader marketplace of ideas and beliefs. Polygamy on the other hand (since it involves marriage and children, both men and women, and non-monogamous relationships), is much more hotly contested. Mainstream Indonesian cinema is one site in which this Islamic practice is portrayed and discussed.

Before *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, *Berbagi Suami* (*Love to Share*, Nia Dinata, 2006) tackled the issue of polygamy; its title translates as "Sharing a Husband." Produced by Kalyana Shira and sponsored by the Ford Foundation, *Berbagi Suami* is a social-realist film critical of polygamy. It is composed of three different stories of polygamous relationships, each showing the trouble and heartbreak that result from a man taking more than one wife. The film shows women in positions of disadvantage, being manipulated, and suffering as a result of the polygamous desires of men. *Berbagi Suami* had good traction overseas and has been extensively written about, but its impact on local audiences was less impressive. The male characters are loathsome, and only the second story offers an escape, when two wives runaway together as lovers—still contentious for most Indonesians. According to Kurnia,[57] *Berbagi Suami* shows that "polygamy causes trouble for all involved, but an end to these troubles will come only from shared efforts by men and women to eliminate the practice." *Berbagi Suami* is an important anti-polygamy film but not one that is convincing for a mainstream Indonesian audience.

Ayat-Ayat Cinta entered the debate on polygamy because it dramatized a polygamous marriage brought about by necessity and so kept within the boundaries of scripture.[58] Throughout the film, Maria is shown desiring both Fahri and the Islam he represents. Because Fahri marries Maria in the name of justice and requested Aisha's permission, his second marriage is seen as being driven by Islamic principles rather than lust. Its representation was divisive in that proponents of polygamy read it as a celebration of the practice, whereas progressive commentators saw it as a worrying endorsement. Ariel Heryanto notes however that these interpretations missed how polygamy was actually presented in the film.[59] In the book, he says, there is little space given to describing how the polygamous marriage proceeds

56. Tessa Randello, "Hijab: A Personal choice," *The Jakarta Post*, February 21, 2017.
57. Novi Kurnia, "Berbagi Suami (Love for Share): The Discourse of Polygamy in a Recent Indonesian Film," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 19 (February 2009): 54.
58. This is the position of the author El Shirazy himself. See "Melihat Poligami dalam Film Ketika Cinta Bertasbih," *Republika*, June 3, 2009.
59. Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure*, 56.

because Maria dies soon after marriage. In the film however, this section between her marriage and her death is extended to show how problematic polygamous life is. Fahri struggles to mediate between his two wives, without wanting to favor one over the other. Aisha leaves the household frustrated, but returns when Maria is on her deathbed. Heryanto suggests that this presentation of polygamy is more ambiguous than many assumed, and the film privileges monogamous marriage as Maria's death allows Fahri and Aisha to continue as husband and wife. Author El Shirazy was less than pleased with the way in which Bramantyo presented the polygamous marriage as troubled. Director Bramantyo stayed away from the debate over polygamy, preferring not to comment publicly on the issue.[60]

If *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* left the debate around polygamy unresolved, a more recent film co-produced by Bramantyo, *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* (*The Heaven that isn't Missed*, Kuntz Agus, 2015) articulates even more clearly the view that while polygamy is permissible it is destructive and therefore should not be practiced. Here, monogamous marriage built on romantic love is promoted over polygamy. *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* explores in greater depth and detail the damage a second marriage can cause for the first—hence the title, a reference to the husband not realizing the "heaven" of his first marriage. Fedi Nuril, reprising a role similar to Fahri in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, plays Pras who is guided by Islamic principles but through a turn of events takes a second wife, forcing him to negotiate between the two. Based on a book by Asma Nadia, the film was seen by over 1.5 million people, making it the top film of the year. It was released during the high season of *Lebaran* in 2015 and remained in cinemas for over two months. *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* produced by Bramantyo with MD Pictures, and stars Laudya C. Bella who plays Pras' wife Arini.

Pras and Arini (Laudya Cynthia Bella) are the perfect Muslim couple: the two meet, fall in love, marry, and have a daughter Nadia (Sandrinna Michelle). Their marriage is enviable as other couples around them cope with infidelity and divorce. On a work trip outside the city, Pras rescues a pregnant woman (called Mei Rose, played by Raline Shah) who has crashed her car with the intention of killing herself. In hospital, Mei Rose receives medical treatment and successfully gives birth to a baby boy. Still determined to die by suicide, Mei Rose climbs onto the hospital roof but is stopped when Pras intervenes and promises to marry her and care for her newborn son. In a fateful moment, Pras decides not to tell Arini what has happened, fearful that Arini will see it as betrayal. In an effort to maintain normalcy, he sets up a second household for Mei Rose, but over time maintaining two separate households becomes unsustainable. Pras initially maintains a distance from Mei Rose but is increasingly seduced by her, and as he spends more time with her feels guilty about Arini. Arini, feeling that Pras is hiding something, follows him and

60. In his blog entries about *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, Bramantyo makes no mention of polygamy. However, in the public comments section, the issue of polygamy is one of the main topics of discussion. See, for example, Hanung Bramantyo, "AAC Bajakan!!!," *Jagad Pakeliran*, February 24, 2008. http://hanungbramantyo.multiply.com/journal/item/12.

discovers the second wife. Initially angry and disappointed, Arini under guidance from her mother learns to be *ikhlas* (accepting), and to rise above the jealousy. Mei Rose subsequently moves in with them, and when she sees that Arini is the better woman, she opts to leave, leaving her son behind as a brother to Nadia.

Like *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* shows that polygamy is emotionally impossible by suggesting that Pras cannot be fair to both women. It uses a classic love triangle scenario to heighten the competition between the two wives as they seek affection from Pras. After Pras marries Mei Rose he is unable to give the same level of commitment to Arini, especially as he finds Mei Rose wanting him to be a proper husband and not just a legal one. Mei Rose seduces Pras by preparing a delicious dinner for him and when Pras gives her Islamic reading material, she asks that he teach her personally. Pras gives little importance to the relationship he had developed with Arini, his *surga* (heaven), and only later realizes what he had lost. The demands from both wives become untenable for Pras, despite his best intentions. The reasons why he marries Mei Rose are absurd, but Pras is faced with a dilemma, and in this scenario marrying Mei Rose becomes the only moral option. Despite his altruistic intentions, Pras cannot explain the situation to Arini, because her father had warned Pras not to mistreat her. It is revealed that Arini's father had a second wife, unbeknownst to Arini, which her mother had accepted and carried as a secret burden her entire life.

Underpinning the problematization of polygamy are certain assumptions, expectations, and values around the role of men and women. While the story seems to be about Pras and his decisions, Arini is the moral and pious center of the film. Pras falls in love with her when he sees her teaching at a local religious school, and after they are married she creates the perfect household. She is beautiful, pleasant, pious, smart, and wears a *jilbab*. She trusts him, and when he breaks that trust she feels betrayed and aggrieved. Yet her emotional journey, like that of her own mother, sees her rising above anger and jealousy to accept sincerely (*ikhlas*) her situation and to prove to both Mei Rose and Pras that she is the better woman. In one scene, Arini asserts her rights as the first wife by accusing Mei Rose of taking away her happiness for the sake of her own. If the film has a message, it is that by being a loving wife who creates the perfect *surga* for her husband, a woman will ensure that her husband will have no reason to take a second wife.

What *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* does much more clearly than *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* is to espouse an anti-polygamy position while supporting prevailing norms around love and the role of women in relationships. Love, marriage, and building a household are the primary fantasies in films like this, which meet audience expectations while presenting a strong but normative female lead character who is dedicated to her husband and her family yet successful in her own right. Asma Nadia is aiming to show not only women's character and heartache in the story, but to show how good Muslims are the product of good families and love between husband and wife. Polygamy is thus presented as incompatible with the idea of romantic love

leading to a happy marriage. Given that romantic love has become a cornerstone in contemporary Indonesian pop culture, polygamy can be shown in conflict with that ideal by revealing how it disrupts marriage, causes heartache for women, and leaves good Muslim men like Pras in a dilemma. Arguably, it is in films such as *Surga yang Tak Dirindukan* that the anti-polygamy argument of fairness can best be expressed through fictional representations in ways that are non-didactic. This makes the argument more palatable, enables it to reach a younger audience, and shows how films such as these (which are quite conservative in some ways) are engaged in an ideological struggle over the definitions of love and marriage in an era of Islamic revival.

Hanung Bramantyo Flirting with Islam

Following his success with *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, director Hanung Bramantyo has gone on to establish himself as the most prolific filmmaker working in the Islamic genre. To date he has been involved as either director, writer or producer, in ten other Islamic feature films including *Doa yang Mengancam* (*The Threatening Prayer*, 2008), *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (*Woman in a Turban*, 2009), *Sang Pencerah* (*The Enlightener*, 2010), *?* a.k.a. *Tanda Tanya* (*Question Mark*, 2011), *Hijab* (2015), and *Mencari Hilal* (*The Crescent Moon*, Ismail Basbeth, 2015). Not every film has had the same commercial success as *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, and many have been controversial, nevertheless his reputation affords him certain privileges with producers who are willing to trust his vision and abilities. Bramantyo's output covers both mainstream love stories and more critical or challenging works as he straddles the Islamic film genre as one of its most unlikely and controversial contributors. His skill as a filmmaker and his politics has allowed him to shape a genre at the center of ongoing cultural debates in contemporary Indonesia. Here I look at three further prominent titles that Bramantyo has been involved in to explore how he has diversified the Islamic genre.

Ten years ago, Bramantyo was one of many new filmmakers emerging after the New Order with little inclination to make an Islamic film. Bramantyo was a nominal Muslim, born in a Muhammadiyah family in Yogyakarta, moving to Jakarta in his early twenties to study film at IKJ. One of his earliest feature films was *Catatan Akhir Sekolah* (*Notes from the End of School*, 2005) that addressed issues of corruption in a high school through a group of graduating students exposing corrupt school officials by using video. His horror films *Lentera Merah* (*The Red Lantern*, 2005) and *Legenda Sundel Bolong* (*The Legend of Sundel Bolong*, 2007)—discussed in the previous chapter—explicitly addressed the 1965 violence and murders, earning him rebuke and protest from more conservative Islamic factions who see any attempt to reopen the history of 1965 as a covert communist plot. His early work was attentive to mainstream audiences, but often made critical and reformist comments on the state of Indonesian society. The filmmaker who has defined the Islamic genre to this

extent in many ways seems to have accidently taken on this role when he directed *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* in 2008.

Having discussed his directorial effort *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* earlier in the chapter, I turn to his subsequent Islamic film *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* for the controversy that it generated. Based on a novel by the feminist author Abidah El Khalieqy, the film follows the life of Anissa (Revalina S. Temat), the daughter of a *kyai* in a conservative East Javanese *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). She is free-spirited and shown riding a horse along the beach, and in the *pesantren* she has a strong personality, often arguing with her father. Against her will, she marries Samsudin (Reza Rahadian), the son of another powerful *pesantren* family for reasons of political alliance building. Nevertheless, she pursues her dream of educating the girls in the *pesantren*, which places her in opposition to the prevailing patriarchal culture of the school, which had denied girls education and given them few rights. In one scene that many critics have zeroed in on, she gives her students a copy of Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Bumi Manusia* (*This Earth of Mankind*), banned under the New Order because of the author's links to the communist party. Her husband meanwhile becomes violent, and takes a second wife, and Anissa reconnects with her childhood sweetheart, Khudori (Oka Antara). When Anissa and Khudori are discovered in a house together and accused of *khalwat* (close proximity often assumed to be adulterous), they are taken outside to be stoned but are stopped when Anissa's mother challenges anyone without sin to throw the first stone—no one does. Anissa is allowed to divorce Samsudin and marry Khudori.

Responses to *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* were divided with many Muslim feminists endorsing the film for its progressive gender politics, whereas others see the film besmirching the image of *pesantren*. The head of Mesjid Istiqal, the country's largest mosque, Ali Mustafa Yakub, claimed that the film slandered (*fitnah*) *pesantrens*, although he had not, and would not, watch it.[61] Prominent New Order intellectual Taufiq Ismail accused Bramantyo of being a communist agent writing:

> This young person wants to present himself as someone creative, super-liberal, open-minded, but only by showing the shortcomings and defects of the *ummat*, which he did with enthusiasm. . . . But indeed he is a leftist at heart, [that is] the trend for young people these days, they are not aware that they are letting themselves become agents of the Hammer and Sickle.[62]

For many, any negative depictions of Islam are seen as an attack on the religion and often equated with a support for communism and atheism. Yet many Muslim

61. Reza Yunanto, "Imam Besar Istiqlal: Perempuan Berkalung Sorban Fitnah Terhadap Pesantren," *detikNews*, February 6, 2009.

62. Taufiq Ismail, "Hanung, Kau Keterlaluan: Pesantren dan Kiyai Begitu Kau Burukkan," *Suara Islam*, June 28, 2010. Original reads: "Anak muda ini mau menunjukkan dirinya kreatif, super-liberal, berfikiran luas, tapi dengan mendedahkan kekurangan-kekurangan dan cacat-cela ummat, yang dilakukannya dengan senang hati. . . . Tapi memang pada dasarnya dia kekiri-kirian, mode anak muda zaman kini, tidak sadar mengangkat diri sendiri jadi agen muda Palu Arit."

Figure 4.6: A poster from the Indonesian Daulah Islam (Islamic State) group accuses Hanung Bramantyo of "destroying and manipulating Islam and its history." Personal collection of author.

feminists regard *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* as Bramantyo's most important work for its strong female lead who is unafraid of pursuing her goals of personal and gender liberation. Bramantyo too stands by the work and the message of women's empowerment, seeing it as a corrective to *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*.

Bramantyo's next controversial film was *Tanda Tanya*, a film about multiculturalism and interfaith issues. Based on true stories from people Bramantyo knew, it follows a number of characters in Semarang who are grappling with demands placed on them by their religion and the realities of life as they seek work, love, community, and a sense of belonging. For example, a Chinese restaurant that serves pork hires Muslim staff, including Menuk (Revalina S. Temat), who wears a *jilbab*, but the Chinese owner (Hengky Solaiman) has created a work environment respectful of the beliefs of the Muslim workers. Another character, a Muslim woman Rika (Endhita Wibisono), has converted to Christianity following her divorce must contend with her Muslim son (Baim) who feels abandoned. An out of work actor, Surya (Agus Kuncoro), accepts a part at Rika's church playing Jesus in the nativity play for which he is paid, but this causes him existential grief as he is Muslim. Although aiming to illustrate the national motto of "unity in diversity," the film was criticized for not privileging Islam as the truer religion (first amongst equals). Rather, *Tanda Tanya* shows how religious ideals and the realities of life often create complications. *Tanda Tanya* proved to be quite controversial for the

Indonesian public, with cinema screenings abandoned and a protest organized outside television station SCTV that forced the station to cancel its broadcast of the film. Bramantyo was perturbed by this turn of events and continues to criticize the LSF and broadcasters for giving in so easily.

Although a commercial flop, Bramantyo's film *Hijab* (2015) again expanded the discussion of Islam and the role of women in particular. *Hijab* is the story of four female friends, each of whom has adopted a different style of veil. In conversation they discover that although married, they are all financially dependent on their husbands. Seeking to become financially independent, they secretly go into business together opening an online fashion store selling stylish *hijab*. As their business booms they realize they have to tell their husbands, resulting in tensions between spouses as the husbands feel emasculated by their wives' success. Resolution comes when all four of the husbands accept their wives' ingenuity and join the business themselves. Challenging conservative norms around women and their role in marriage, *Hijab* provides positive feminist role models and shows how new forms of Islamization represent opportunities, not threats.

No one person defines contemporary Islamic pop culture in Indonesia, but Hanung Bramantyo is clearly one of the key architects of how Islam is represented to mainstream cinema audiences. He may be something of a chameleon—with films that promote new Islamism, to more critical feminist and progressive works—but it can be said he has pushed for a plurality of Islamic voices and representations in his work. Oftentimes this has put him into conflict with more conservative voices, which has made him more cautious and at times even reluctant to continue his work as a filmmaker that addresses Islamic issues in his films. If his detractors succeed, it would mean the silencing of an important voice in the discourse of Islamic beliefs, values, and practices in this democratic, market era. As Inaya Rakhmani writes in her recent analysis of Islamic themed television, as Islam is represented more in mainstream pop culture it can be discussed, critiqued, and debated just as it might be become a consumption object of fantasy and emulation for audiences.[63]

Conclusion: Mainstreaming Islam

As an emerging genre, Islamic films represent a new and important phenomenon. Not only are they a reflection of the growing interest Indonesian audiences and consumers have in "Islamicized" products, but that Indonesian filmmakers have been willing to respond to this market demand by making films that meet the desires and interests of this audience. It is easy to see this as a new phenomenon, but the longer process of Islamization has been occurring in the archipelago ever since Islam first spread to Indonesia in the thirteenth century. What is different is the integration of religious ideas into mainstream pop culture in a way that provokes debate over the

63. Rakhmani, *Mainstreaming Islam.*

role and meaning of Islam in everyday life. There is a diversity of "Islams" presented in Indonesian cinema, reflective of the broad diversity of beliefs and practices amongst the population. As a result, it is possible to identify two broad streams of Islamic film, examples of which have been discussed in this chapter.

As more Indonesian Muslims have come to identify themselves through their religion, they want their beliefs and practices to be portrayed on screen confidently, proudly, and naturally. They do not need to be preached to since they are already believers, nor do they necessarily want their faith or beliefs challenged. Rather, cinema has become a site for fantasies and reassurance. Indonesian Islamic films reveal how new forms of piety are enacted through correct behavior, conviction, and aspiration. Islamic films are a response to a growing trend in Indonesian society, which for many producers might involve a religious obligation but also presents an attractive commercial proposition. Films describe and show how one can be both simultaneously Islamic and modern by participating in consumer culture and romance while upholding certain Islamic principles of morality, behavior, modesty, and belief. At the same time, due to the more "progressive" politics of filmmakers, representations in the films are not extreme. Those advocating Syariah law and more conservative forms of Islam are usually outside the film industry, staging protests and yelling at cinemas.[64] Inside the cinema, the representations on screen are for mainstream audiences, defining their collective stance on Islam and Islamic practices.

Due to the fact that many filmmakers come from a culturally progressive and creative middle class, there are films that challenge and question the growing Islamization of Indonesian society or want to reframe its tenants. These films can be seen to problematize the ways in which Islamic beliefs and practices interact with Indonesian cultures or other belief systems. Films in this group include *Berbagi Suami*, and the films of Nurman Hakim, *Khalifah* (*Caliph*, 2010) and *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (*3 Prayers 3 Loves*, 2008). They express a disquiet with the way in which Islamic principles are overriding Indonesia's secular or multi-religious principles. Whilst Hanung Bramantyo belongs to both groups, his work sits between them, trying to articulate new ways of thinking about Islam and its place in Indonesian society. Audiences are doing this too by consuming mainstream images of Islam and bringing Islam into the market.

64. One attempt to convert street politics into a film came in 2017 with the release of the much-hyped film *212: The Power of Love* (Jastis Arimba) designed to portray the 212 protestors against Jakartan governor Ahok as peaceful and rational. Recording an audience of only 273,711, it failed to convert the number of street protestors into ticket sales.

5
Audiences without Cinemas

The Nation's Cinemas

Despite the popularity of cinema-going and the importance of cinema to Indonesia's pop culture, the number of cinemas per capita in Indonesia is low. According to 2013 data,[1] Indonesia had only 308 cinemas and 1074 screens for a population of 249.9 million people, or 4.29 screens per capita (screens per one million people). This is a significant drop from 1990, when cinemas numbered 2,073 establishments with 3,048 screens, or 17.1 screens per capita (population of 178.6 million people). Although the cinema numbers have increased since reaching a nadir in 2005 of 140 cinemas, the exponential increase in domestic production has placed renewed attention on the exhibition sector and the problem of capacity. The lack of cinemas has been taken up in various discussions by film industry practitioners and the press, with a recent news report lamenting the fact that Indonesia has fewer cinemas than the city of Beijing, and has a lower cinema-to-population ratio than countries like India, Malaysia, and Japan.[2] Cinemas are seen as important infrastructure in the film economy and were the subject of study and analysis throughout the New Order.[3]

This chapter looks at the exhibition sector and the shifting cinema landscape from the New Order to post–New Order eras and its impact on film consumption practices. As earlier chapters have shown, changes to the cinema business over the 1990s and into the 2000s can be attributed in part to the arrival of new forms of media and associated consumption patterns, the changing political economy of film distribution and exhibition, and the availability of capital investment, especially in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis which shuttered many peripheral and under-patronized cinemas. Over the past decade, with the stabilization of the

1. Data from the Association of Indonesian Film Producers (APROFI, Asosiasi Produser Film Indonesia) and EKSB PIFILM (Direktorat Pengembangan Industri Perfilman, Direktorat Jenderal Ekonomi Kreatif Berbasis Seni Dan Budaya, Kementerian Pariwisata).
2. Saugy Riyandi, "Jumlah bioskop di Indonesia kalah dibanding Malaysia dan Jepang, *Merdeka*, October 14, 2014. http://www.merdeka.com/uang/jumlah-bioskop-di-indonesia-kalah-dibanding-malaysia-dan-jepang.html.
3. Haris Jauhari, ed. *Layar Perak: 90 Tahun Bioskop di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Dewan Film Nasional; Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1992); S. M. Ardan, *Dari gambar idoep ke sinepleks* (Jakarta: GPBSI, 1992).

economy and renewed consumer spending, new cinemas have appeared, and large investments have been made in the exhibition sector increasing the total number of screens across the country. Increased competition in the exhibition sector has occurred over the last decade following the arrival of a new multiplex chains Blitz Megaplex in 2006, and more recently by Platinum Cineplex and New Star Cineplex in 2012, Cinemaxx in 2014, and Flix Cinema in 2017. In 2016, Presidential Decree Number 44 (Perpres No.44 Tahun 2016) allowed foreign owners and operators into the exhibition sector which until then had been protected from majority foreign ownership.

Cinemas are the primary point of sale for feature films. For most mainstream filmmakers, costs are amortized via various distribution and sales channels including selling television rights, online streaming and licensing home video, and cinema release. Although recent attention has shifted to new digital and online platforms of distribution, cinemas remain the primary release point for mainstream films, especially in Indonesia where other channels of distribution such as online sales remain limited. Yet with so few cinemas, film producers have limited sites to generate income, and conversely, audiences have few places to watch films. As local film production increased over the 2000s, individual titles have to increasingly compete against a larger number of other films for screenings in a very limited pool of exhibitors. Accessibility remains a key concern for Indonesia's audiences, and the small number of cinemas is one of the limiting factors to feature films increasing their reach to a bigger national audience. Many people live far from the nearest cinema or are in cities with few options. For filmmakers, being unable to reach audiences reduces their total possible ticket sales, income, and therefore limits budget options for future productions.

Building Cinemas, Screening Films

Since the 1950s, cinemas have been regarded as a crucial aspect of Indonesian infrastructure that needs to support and develop a local film industry. The slogan "*Film Nasional harus menjadi tuan rumah di negeri sendiri*" ("National film must become master in its own country") positions cinemas as the interface between filmmakers and the audience. Reducing foreign domination of cinemas has united film producers, government officials, and other supporters of *film nasional*. Concerns about the role of cinemas were heightened in the 1950s as Indonesian films found themselves in competition with films from Malaya, Philippines, and the United States, and filmmakers felt sidelined in their own country. However, when PAPFIAS petitioned successfully to have American imports banned, the action was later described as too drastic, and Johan Tjasmadi called this period the "most critical in the history of national cinema."[4] After 1968, when film imports resumed, movies from

4. Quoted in S. M. Ardan, "Bioskop dalam Sejarah Perfilman di Indonesia," Data Perbioskopan di Indonesia.

Hong Kong, India, Japan, Italy, and the United States filled the nation's cinemas. Progressively over the 1970s, film import quotas were reduced and local production subsided, which allowed local production to return to facilitating the emergence of a sustainable domestic industry. In 1972, a quarter of all admissions were for Indonesian films, rising to over 40 percent in 1980, indicating that Indonesian films had gained a significant foothold in the nation's cinemas.

As domestic production grew in the early 1970s, local producers found it hard to get their films in some cinemas, especially first-run A-class cinemas. A-class cinemas in Jakarta at the time were dominated by three groups (Indonesian Combined Cinemas, New Garden Hall, and Djakarta Group), all of whom worked with selected importers and preferred to screen imported films.[5] To protest how cinemas were excluding Indonesian films, actor Farouk Afero famously staged a one man protest in September 1973 with a sign that read "*BIOSKOP, jangan anak tirikan film nasional*" ("CINEMAS, don't sideline national films") whilst repeatedly hitting his head. For this, he was angrily rebuked by Johan Tjasmadi from the GPBSI who said that no one party should be singled out for blame, and that working together was the best way forward. Toni Wiantono from the ICC Group suggested a cooperative approach without excessive regulation:

> [we] must understand each other's functions and be able to support each other. Cinema owners can't force producers. Conversely producers can't force cinemas. Anything that is forced won't last long. It will be the same for government regulations.[6]

Two years later in May 1975, in response to industry concerns, the SKB 3 Menteri was introduced which in part established the Indonesian film distributor PT Perfin whose remit included requiring that "all cinemas . . . screen national films at least twice per month" ("*semua bioskop diwajibkan memutar film nasional minimal 2 (dua) kali setiap bulan*"). PT Perfin was jointly operated by the PPFI and GPBSI and had the effect of changing the perception of cinemas as being antithetical to national cinema.[7]

The idea that the four main players—importers, producers, distributors, and cinemas—could work together for the advancement of *film nasional* reflected the corporatist and organicist approach to government that characterized the New Order.[8] As mentioned in Chapter 1, key stakeholders were grouped and represented by organizations including the GPBSI representing cinema owners, AIF representing importers, the PPFI representing producers, KFT representing crews and

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Direktorat Pembinaan Film dan Rekaman Video, Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia, PT Peredaran Film Indonesia. Jakarta. 1984.

5. Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep*, 60–61.
6. Quoted in Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep*, 5.
7. Ardan, "Bioskop dalam Sejarah Perfilman."
8. David Bourchier, *Illiberal Democracy in Indonesia: The Ideology of the Family State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

Figure 5.1: Farouk Afero's one-man protest in 1973 against cinemas for not playing local films. Photograph from Kompas / Pat Hendranto.

directors, and PARFI representing actors. These organizations were subsumed under the larger *film nasional* agenda. In 1987 for example, Bucuk Suharto, representing the country's major film organizations, describes cinemas as "the spearhead for National Film, because it is the cinemas which determine the fate of National Film, [and] cinemas have the main role in creating audience appreciation."[9] Organicism required these agencies to work together to seek consensus and cooperation whilst avoiding open conflict and criticism. That goal was to realize national film as master in its own house, whilst adhering to the functional and developmentalist thinking of the New Order regime. By the 1980s, as the New Order's corporatist structure had become an effective structure of control, it had also become unable to assess and adequately diagnose the emerging challenges the film industry faced.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, local film production increased as did its share of screen time in the nation's cinemas. By the early 1980s, Indonesian films accounted for 40 percent of admissions but were earning around 30 percent of the nation's box-office income. The disparity in income and admissions was due to

9. Bucuk Suharto, "Sambutan Wakil dari Organisasi Perfilman," Hasil-Hasil Musyawarah Besar III. Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia. Jakarta, August 9–11, 1987, 1.

the fact that Indonesian films played well in the lower-class B, C, and D cinemas. In these lower-class cinemas, Indonesian films enjoyed a substantial market position, which the PPFI claimed meant that Indonesian films were now "*tuan di rumah sendiri*" (master in their own house).[10] It also meant that the A class, first run cinemas were home to foreign films—increasingly those from Hollywood—where ticket prices were higher. Nevertheless, cinema numbers increased year on year, reaching a peak of 2073 cinemas in 1990. The first drive-in opened in Jaya Ancol in 1970 with room for 850 cars, the country's first twin cinema opened in Monas Park on February 20, 1975, and cinemas grew in capacity with some housing over one thousand seats by the early 1980s. Growing cinema numbers reflected the popularity of cinema under the New Order and the widespread consumption of film as entertainment.

Entering the 1980s, the cinema-going market was beginning to change. Whilst there remained a mass market audience, a subset of new middle-class consumers was beginning to drive new modes of consumption linked to shopping and lifestyle. Propelling this change was an emerging middle class of consumers created as a result of the country's economic development since the 1970s.[11] Rapid export-orientated industrialization of the Indonesian economy and the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with an increase in white collar occupations, especially in Jakarta, produced a segment of the population who had disposable income to spend on themselves. New middle classes in Asia have been shown to be driven by lifestyle-orientated consumption including fashion, branded goods, and other forms of conspicuous consumption.[12] Middle-class Indonesian consumers would contribute to the evolving film landscape by their consumption patterns which were skewed towards imported Hollywood films and to air-conditioned spaces in new shopping malls.

New middle-class consumers were also at the forefront of adopting new entertainment technologies such as satellite television and home video (VHS, laserdisc). These technologies began to challenge the state's control over information especially "pirate" VHS cassettes which were portrayed as being a threat to morality because they were often brought in from overseas uncensored. At the same time, a lack of investment in production equipment, budgets, and so on increasingly made Indonesian films visually inferior to Hollywood films which had by the mid-1970s turned to the blockbuster as its mode of global appeal. For the cinema business, new technologies threatened to take audiences away from cinemas, reducing their

10. PPFI, "Komitmen terhadap Acuan Dasar Pengembangan Perfilman Nasional," Rakernas GPBSI IV, February 17–19, 1989, 2.
11. Takashi Shiraishi, "The Rise of New Urban Middle Classes in Southeast Asia: What is its national and regional significance?" RIETI Discussion Paper Series 04-E-011, The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2004. http://www.rieti.go.jp/jp/publications/dp/04e011.pdf.
12. Richard Robison, "The middle class and the bourgeoisie in Indonesia," in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonalds and Middle-class Revolution*, ed. Richard Robison and David Goodman (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 79–101.

income and viability. Johan Tjasmadi wrote a number of analyses in this period that drew on Alvin Toffler's theories to explain the disruption that changes in the media and technology would bring. Cinema's position as "prima donna of the entertainment world" was threatened he argued if it did not adapt to market segmentation, providing modern amenities and comfort, and respond quickly to consumer trends.[13] Some cinemas in Indonesia were reportedly still using projectors from the 1920s and 1930s.[14]

Cinema owners were encouraged by the GBPSI to embrace these changes, upgrade their cinemas, and to adopt more customer-centric forms of business management.[15] Sub-dividing single screen cinemas into multiplexes was encouraged to satisfy a range of viewing preferences for a family, whilst offering a clean, orderly, air-conditioned, and luxurious cinema-going experience. Johan Tjasmadi chastised existing cinema owners for not keeping pace with developments:

> It is the cinema operators themselves who are at fault. Why do they not want to upgrade their cinemas, causing their audiences to abandon them? Others have already renovated their cinemas to be able to attract audience interest in going to the cinema (movie going habit), they are stuck in an outdated paradigm.[16]

However what Tjasmadi failed to mention is that few cinema owners had the financial resources to convert their cinemas into multiplexes or to upgrade their facilities. Many simply did not generate enough income to afford expensive renovations. What Tjasmadi as head of the GPBSI failed to note was the emergence of a new cinema chain called 21 in 1986, which fundamentally altered the film industry landscape in Indonesia.

The 21 Group

Although covered in brief earlier in Chapter 1, I now look more closely at the history of the Cinema 21 Group and the political economy of its rise to dominance. By the early 1990s, within a space of five years, Cinema 21 had emerged as the country's dominant cinema chain with over hundred multiplex cinemas in major cities across the country. Primarily owned by Sudwikatmono, the President's cousin and foster

13. GPBSI, "Pekembangan Perbioskopan di Indonesia Menghadapi Masa Datang dan Kendala yang Dihadapi Masa Sekarang," Dengar Pendapat dengan DPR-RI. Jakarta. February 21, 1991, 10.
14. Alex Leo Zulkarnain, "Kata Pengantar," Data Perbioskopan di Indonesia 1984," Direktorat Pembinaan Film dan Rekaman Video, Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia, PT Peredaran Film Indonesia, December 31, 1984.
15. GPBSI, "Hasil Evaluasi Komisi B Bidang Sinema dan Teknologi Serta Prospek Usaha Perbioskopan," Hasil-Hasil Musyawarah Besar III Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia. Jakarta. August 9–11, 1987, 2–3.
16. Original reads: "Yang salah pengelola dari bioskop itu sendiri. Mengapa mereka tidak mau meng-upgrade ruang pertunjukannya, sehingga akhirnya ditinggalkan oleh penontonnya? Orang lain sudah mempercantik bioksop agar mampu menarik minat masyarakat untuk nonton (movie going habit), mereka terpaku pada pola lama." Quoted in Ardan, *Dari Gambar Idoep*, 11.

brother,[17] the Cinema 21 Group would successfully adapt to the changing market conditions over the 1980s. This was a distinct shift in market conditions compared to the 1970s which had been relatively open and competitive across the importing, distribution and exhibition sectors. The diversity of ownership and cinema types seen at the beginning of the 1980s that included individual owner-operators, cooperatives, government agencies, and military cooperatives,[18] had been replaced by a single conglomerate group dominating at the top end of the market and a reduced number of smaller cinemas at the bottom end seeing less and less revenue. By the end of the 1990s, the Cinema 21 Group operated movie theaters in all the major urban centers, capitalizing on their location within shopping malls or in iconic standalone cinemas such as the Djakarta Theater and Megaria (Metropole) in Jakarta. The Cinema 21 Group succeeded in restructuring the exhibition sector whilst becoming the country's dominant exhibiter.

Sudwikatmono went into business with key Suharto crony Sudono Salim in the 1960s, and he became the director of Bogasari Flour Mills through which he would build his business empire that would include Indika Entertainment, Cinema 21, and the broadcaster SCTV. Sudwikatmono produced his first two films in 1974 via his PT Sugar Indah company, *Ranjang Pengantin* (*Marriage Bed*, Teguh Karya) and *Kawin Lari* (*Elopement*, Teguh Karya), both in collaboration with the Mandarin Film Consortium, which gave production capital as part of their import substitution mandate. Here, no doubt, he met the Tan brothers—Bambang Sutrisno (Tan Shui Ying) and Benny Suherman (Tan Shui Liong)—who owned the Mandarin film importer PT Sejahtera Film. Sudwikatmono and the Tan brothers joined to form the importer PT Suptan (a contraction of their names).[19] As with many business ventures involving the Suharto family, ethnic Chinese were compliant partners providing business acumen to a politically connected family member. PT Suptan itself produced a number of notable films including Teguh Karya's *Perkawinan dalam Semusim* (*Wedding in Season*, 1976) and *Badai Pasti Berlalu* (*The Storm Will Surely Pass*, 1977).

At the time, film imports were subject to quotas which were regulated by one of four "consortiums"—Mandarin, Euro-America 1, Euro-America 2, Asia Non-Mandarin—and importers had to apply through the appropriate consortium to import titles. PT Suptan had a privileged position in the film market as Raam Punjabi attests: "we, the small importers had to align ourselves with the prevailing regulations, but PT Suptan quickly gained the autonomy to import Mandarin films freely."[20] Although sixteen companies were registered in the Mandarin consortium,

17. Budi Kusuma, Sri Pudyastuti, and Tri Budianto Soekarno, "Kerajaan film impor," *Tempo*, July 22, 1989.
18. "Data Perbioskopan di Indonesia," Jakarta. Direktorat Pembinaan Film dan Rekamanan Video; Gabungan Pengusaha Bioskop Seluruh Indonesia; PT Peredaran Film Indonesia, 1984.
19. Kim Yung Keng and Zheng Wei Lin, "Relationship between Chinese Businessmen and Local Elites in Malaysia and Indonesia," *Interfaces for Advanced Economic* Analysis, 2008. http://www.kier.kyoto-u.ac.jp/coe21/dp/151-160/21COE-DP157.pdf.
20. "Kami, importir-importir kecil harus menyesuaikan diri dengan peraturan yang berlaku, tapi P.T. Suptan

only PT Suptan was active.[21] Throughout the 1970s, around 20 to 25 percent of all tickets sold in Indonesia were for "Mandarin" titles mostly from the two big Hong Kong studios Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest, thus giving Suptan a lucrative revenue stream. In 1979 the four consortiums were unified into the AIF (Asosiasi Importir Film) under a "single leadership" which then handed out distribution licenses to member companies.[22] Directly or indirectly, Sudwikatmono controlled almost all film imports into Indonesia through three proxies: Benny Suherman (PT Suptan Film) for Mandarin films, and Harris Lasmana (PT Nusantara Film) and Jiwat KK (PT Bola Dunia Film) for Euro-American films.[23]

Smaller importers found that their ability to import films was limited and now dependent on their relationship with Suptan and its proxy companies. Importing films from India, Japan, Italy, and other countries remained a possibility but even combined these films never attracted more than 20 percent of the total audience. By the late 1970s, Italian and Japanese films had almost disappeared from cinema screens. Indian films remained popular in the cheaper lower-class cinemas, accounting for 5–15 percent of tickets sold throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but never accounted for more than 10 percent of the total box office takings. Some importers diversified their business, by turning to production, such as Ram Soraya of Soraya Intercine in 1982, whilst others left the film industry altogether. Importers who wanted to keep importing had little choice but to yield to PT Suptan, facilitating Suptan's position of dominance. Compliant importers were guaranteed lucrative quotas under Suptan's patronage. Protest was near impossible.

Not content with his effective monopoly over film imports, Sudwikatmono looked to expand his business through vertical integration by establishing a cinema chain in 1987 known publicly as Cineplex 21 or Cinema 21. Sudwikatmono already owned three cinemas in Jakarta and had converted them to twin cinemas in 1978,[24] but the multiplex cinema would introduce a new paradigm to the exhibition market in Indonesia. Sudwikatmono claims he got the idea of the multi-screen, air-conditioned cinema complex or cineplex during a visit to the USA in the 1980s.[25] Bringing the concept to Indonesia, Sudwikatmono embarked on establishing his own chain of cinemas by buying out existing operators, working with partners outside Jakarta, and building cinemas in the new shopping malls that were beginning to appear in major urban centers.

Benny Suherman and Sudwikatmono established PT Subentra in 1985 to manage Cinema 21, alongside their other business interests that included banking

melaju dengan keleluasaannya mengimpor film Mandarin dengan bebas." Quoted in Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi*, 136.

21. Eric Sasono et al., *Menjegal film Indonesia: pemetaan ekonomi politik industri film Indonesia* (Jakarta: Perkumpulan Rumah Film Indonesia dan Yayasan Tifa, 2011), 296.
22. Sen, *Indonesian Cinema*, 59.
23. Latief, "Dominasi Film Impor."
24. Sasono et al., *Menjegal film Indonesia*, 307.
25. Sudwikatmono, "Sinepleks dan Industri Film Indonesia," in *Layar Perak: 90 Tahun Bioskop Di Indonesia*, ed. Haris Jauhari (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1992).

(Bank Subentra), heavy industries, and chemicals. Two connected companies called PT Camila Internusa Film (operated by Harris Lasmana) and PT Satrya Perkasa Esthetika Film were established in 1985 to facilitate import and distribution. All three companies were also part owned by the Indonesian military. These entities superseded PT Suptan after a falling out between the Tan Brothers in the early 1980s, although Sudwikatmono maintained business ties with Bambang Sutrisno through joint ownership of Bank Surya and Golden Truly supermarkets.[26] Sudwikatmono would later go into business with Henry Pribadi from the Salim family to establish television station SCTV in 1990 with a 20/80 ownership stake.

To test the cineplex concept, Subentra told Raam Punjabi to convert his Kartika Chandra cinema in Jakarta into a multiplex. Punjabi was exasperated at the "ever-tightening grip of the monopoly,"[27] but nevertheless complied when Sudwikatmono promised that "with his help, the Kartika Chandra Cineplex would never be in short supply of good films because he controlled 100 percent of film imports."[28] In September 1986, the Kartika Chandra was converted from a single screen, 900-seat cinema into a three-screen sineplex of 302, 300, and 218 seats and modernized with wall-to-wall carpet, air-conditioning, Dolby Surround Sound, and modern facilities.[29] Once the Kartika Chandra proved to be a success, the first Subentra-owned and 21-branded Cineplex with four screens opened at 21 Thamrin in Central Jakarta in August 1987, in which Punjabi held a 30 percent stake. Cinema 21 then expanded aggressively into the major cities and urban areas in Indonesia and by 1989, fifteen of the sixty-six cineplexes in Indonesia were owned directly by Subentra, with the rest of them integrated into the Subentra network on a split-income or rental arrangement.[30] By 1991, Cinema 21 owned or operated 199 cineplexes with a total of 742 screens across Indonesia.[31] Together this network of cinemas are referred to as the Cinema 21 Group.

A number of distributors and cinema operators saw the benefit in joining the Cinema 21 Group and willingly did so. Chand Parwez Servia (Kharisma Jabar) who controlled 170 cinemas in West Java integrated his cinemas into the 21 Group. In Central Java, for example, by working with PT Sanggar Film (Bambang Widitomo), Subentra came to supply over 200 cinemas directly and contributed to building two new modern Cineplex in the city of Semarang. In a 1992 interview, Sudwikatmono described the process of expansion benignly as "joining with many friends outside Jakarta to establish the 21 Group in a number of provinces."[32] Subentra's client

26. Keng and Lin, "Relationship between Chinese Businessmen."
27. "Cengkeraman monopoli semakin menguat." Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi*, 180.
28. "Dia mengatakan, dengan bantuannya maka Cineplex Kartika Chandra tidak akan kekurangan pasokan film-film bagus karena dia menguasai 100 percent impor film." Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi*, 193.
29. Located at Jl. Gatot Subroto Kav 19, Jakarta Selatan it is now called Hollywood XXI. Sasono et al., *Menjegal film Indonesia*, 307.
30. Kusuma, Pudyastuti, and Soekarno, 'Kerajaan film impor.'
31. GPBSI, "Pekembangan Perbioskopan di Indonesia," 8.
32. "Kelompok saya memperluas cakrawala dengan mengikutsertakan lebih banyak teman-teman di luar Jakarta untuk membangun Kelompok 21 di berbagai daerah." Sudwikatmono quoted in Jauhari, *Layar Perak*, 160.

Figure 5.2: Kartika Chandra cinema in 1988 following its conversion into a multiplex under the 21 Group. Photograph from Kompas / Julian Sihombing.

companies included Alexander Tedja's PT Isae Film and PT Pan Mitra Sembada companies in Sumatra, East Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and East Indonesia; PT Sanggar Usaha Mandari (Bambang Widianto) in Central Java; and PT Lia Anugrah Semesta (Johnny Pondanga) in West Java; and PT Gading Adi Permai (Tien Ali) in Jakarta. In this way, the Cinema 21 Group and its clients enjoyed a stable and reliable stream of income, no longer subject to competition or negotiation.

For independent cinemas owners and film distributors, the growing power of the Cinema 21 Group represented a commercial threat to their business. Distributor PT Sendang Film based in Semarang and supplying Central Java and Yogyakarta found they could no longer source imported films when their competitor PT Sanggar integrated with Subentra.[33] Cinemas relying on supply from Sendang saw that supply dwindle and either switched to PT Sanggar or went out of business. In other instances, independent cinema owners, such as the owner of the iconic Megaria Cinema in Jakarta, found that "rather than face bankruptcy, it is better for us to rent out," by which he meant Subentra became the cinema's sole supplier.[34] The Megaria cinema was taken over by 21 in 1989 and later renamed Metropole. Subentra would then dictate the screening schedules in its client cinemas privileging the films it imported, preventing other producers or importers access to cinema

33. Sasono et al., *Menjegal film Indonesia*, 198.
34. "Ketimbang bangkrut, ya mendingan kami sewakan." Budi Kusuma et al. "Kerajaan film impor," *Tempo*, July 22, 1989.

screening schedules. By prioritizing its own cinemas, Subentra prevented those outside its Cinema 21 network from accessing first-run films making them wait weeks, months, or even years for prints.[35]

Although Minister of Information Harmoko claimed that the modern multiplex could become a new kind of "civic center,"[36] in reality cinemas were increasingly integrated into a consumer-orientated lifestyle. Here, cinema-going was associated with the mall-based activities of shopping, eating, and socializing, which were increasingly built around globally recognized food and clothing brands, the consumption of American pop culture, and emerging fashion trends. Cinemas were integrating into global flows of capital and entertainment, leaving behind the domestic model of owner-operator cinemas and the potential for a diversity of screened material. Not only were smaller cinema operators sidelined by Cinema 21's monopoly practices, they lacked the capital to upgrade their cinemas. Cinema 21 by contrast had access to capital through its conglomerate business structure which included Bank Subentra and through political connections to state-owned banks.[37] Cinema 21 Group was therefore able to access the money needed to convert and upgrade cinemas and to buy out competitors. The Cinema 21 Group also bought and then closed cinemas as it embarked on consolidation and the elimination of competition.

Cinema 21's rise and consolidation and the emergence of the multiplex as new consumption trend was further reflected in the viewing patterns and box-office revenues for local and imported films. Although audience numbers for foreign and domestic films had swung in favor of domestic films in the early 1980s, the income Indonesian films were generating plateaued and then fell as a percentage over the decade, as Hollywood films came to outpace all other imported films and to achieve 50 percent of all cinema income by 1993. By 1993, Indonesian films were only taking 12 percent of the total box-office income, behind American films (52 percent) and Hong Kong film (30 percent). Over the same period, the ticket prices in Kelas C and D cinemas hardly rose, whereas ticket prices in A and B cinemas, including cineplex, increased dramatically. By 1990, tickets in Class D cinemas were between 100 and 250 rupiah, with Class A cinemas charging between 1,500 and 5,000 rupiah, with Cinema 21 cinemas charging 7,500 to 10,000 rupiah.[38] This not only reduced the revenue for Class D cinemas and by extension domestic producers, it enhanced the revenues collected by Cinema 21. Over the 1980s, production costs had more than doubled from 120–150 million rupiah to 200–400 million rupiah per title making it increasingly unsustainable for local producers.[39]

35. "Small Movie Theaters Struggle in Jakarta," *The Jakarta Post*, September 14, 1997.
36. Harmoko, "Berpijak Pada Bumi Indonesia. Penyegaran Tekad dan Semangat Toeng Insan Perfilman Dalam Memasuki Repelita V," August 11, 1988, 2.
37. Anwar, "The Indonesian Film Industry," 2.
38. GPBSI, "Pekembangan Perbioskopan di Indonesia," 20.
39. PPFI, "Komitmen Terhadap Acuan Dasar Pensembangan Perfilman Nasional," Rakernas GPBSI IV, February 17–18, 1989, 3–4.

Figure 5.3: Eros Djarot (*left*) faces off with Sudwikatmono (*right*) in Jakarta, 1991. Photograph from Tempo / Norman Wibowo.

Cinema 21's expansion and business practices did not go unnoticed and talk in film industry circles began to describe a "monopoly" in import, distribution, and exhibition. Critical media reports began to appear in the late 1980s including in *Tempo*, but escalated when *Langitku Rumahku* (*My Sky My Home*, Slamet Rahardjo Djarot, 1990) was pulled after just one day. Most Indonesian films destined for lower-class cinemas were distributed by PT Perfin, but the producers of *Langitku Rumahku* aimed for a higher-class audience and so negotiated with the A class Djakarta Theater via their distributor Rahim Latif. Unbeknownst to the filmmakers, cinema owners represented by the GPBSI and producers in the PPFI had entered into the Cipayung Agreement that inserted a minimum audience criterion for local films. Although *Langitku Rumahku* had met this minimum requirement, PT Perfin withdrew their support for the film, allowing the cinema to take the film down.[40] The *Langitku Rumahku* filmmakers went public with their grievances and were joined by over two hundred film workers, actors, and actresses who staged a protest in June 1991 decrying the monopolization of distribution and exhibition and the domination of Hollywood films in the nation's cinemas.[41] This did little to

40. Sasono et al., *Menjegal film Indonesia*, 301.
41. "Insan film mengetuk DPR," *Tempo* 19, July 6, 1991.

shift the Cinema 21 Group or the government. The Cinema 21 Group enjoyed the protection of the minister of information, Harmoko, who brushed aside concerns about monopoly saying that "What is important is how to increase national film production. There is no monopoly. Both the association and the GPBSI have their own regulations."[42]

The Cinema 21 Group would further strengthen its market position when it became the designated importer for MPAA studio films. Cinema 21 had relied on individual importers to license and bring in films title-by-title but with the new agreement reached with MPAA studios, individual importers were no longer needed, and films were instead imported directly via Cinema 21's own import companies. The first film to be released under this new agreement was the Warner Brothers film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (Kevin Reynolds, 1991) which opened in forty-eight cinemas.[43] Edward Frumkes, Warner Brothers' vice-president for international distribution, called Subentra "the perfect partner."[44] Consumers were said to benefit because Hollywood films could be released in Indonesia contemporaneously with other countries. At the same time Hollywood films were able to gain an even stronger foothold in Indonesia and the agreement delivered further power to the Cinema 21 Group. Remaining importers were left with less lucrative titles which could only be released in the B, C, and D grade cinemas, with lower ticket prices and more complicated distribution. Cinema 21's agreements with the five MPAA studios gave the MPAA greater say in what films were to be released in Indonesia. Under their new agreement with the MPAA, Cinema 21 now received a percentage screening fee, increasing the need for the company to ensure these films enjoyed primary position in their cinemas.

Indonesia's cinema market in the final decade of the New Order was characterized by a single, powerful chain at the top, dominating the first-run and luxury market, with key sites in all the key cities, and a second group of cinemas, mostly single operations, dispersed across cities and towns in peripheral areas, often poorer, rougher, or rundown, and in dilapidated buildings. "It started to decline in 1993, you could see it already," said cinema owner Tien Ali, "moving to malls is the sign of the times. . . . In the previous era there were no sex films. The cinema used to be family entertainment."[45] A sign that their sources of revenue had begun to diverge, smaller cinemas increasingly showed adult or erotic content. As import quotas were relaxed over the 1990s, benefitting the MPAA and Cinema 21, few local films could access the Cinema 21 theaters, leading to some describing national cinema as no

42. "Yang penting, bagaimana meningkatkan produksi film nasional. Tidak ada monopoli. Baik asosiasi maupun GPBSI, sudah ada aturannya sendiri-sendiri." Quoted in "Insan film mengetuk DPR," *Tempo*, July 6, 1991.
43. "Kerja Sama Time-Warner Bros dan Subentra, Era Baru Peredaran Film Impor di Indonesia," *Bintang*, no. 17, June 1991, 11.
44. "Subentra adalah mitra yang ideal." "Mitra yang ideal," *Tempo*, June 22, 1991.
45. "Mulai mundur tahun 1993, sudah mulai kelihatan. Masuknya mal, jadi pergeseran zaman. . . . Jaman dulu enggak ada yang esek-esek. Dulu bioskop jadi hiburan keluarga." Andi Wesal Saladin, "Kalau Bang Oma Main, Film Barat Mah Lewat," *Okezone News*, May 6, 2010. https://news.okezone.com/read/2010/05/06/345/330125/kalau-bang-oma-main-film-barat-mah-lewat.

longer the "*tuan di rumah sendiri*" but rather the "*tamu*" (guest).[46] Local production had mostly turned to erotic films (*filem esek-esek*) anyway, and could not screen in the prominent Cinema 21 theaters. Of the 106 cinemas operating in Jakarta in 1997, thirty were operated by the Cinema 21 Group.[47]

Financial Crisis and New Players

When the Asian Financial Crisis struck in 1997–1998, *The Jakarta Post* reported that 2,000 cinemas had closed and another 800 were at risk.[48] This meant that by June 2002, Indonesia would host only 264 cinemas (with 676 screens), a drastic drop from the peak in 1990.[49] In the 1970s and 1980s no more than 15 percent of cinemas were located in Jakarta and in 1983, when there were 1,560 cinemas in Indonesia they were spread across the archipelago in most major and minor cities, relative to the province's population and wealth. Over the 1980s and into the 1990s, cinema numbers in Java accelerated, with only North Sumatera keeping pace. Much of this had to do with the growth of Java as the economic center of the country, especially Jakarta. Now, around 87 percent of the nation's cinemas are in Java with 60 percent concentrated in Jakarta and West Java, incorporating the cities of Depok, Bekasi, Bandung, and Bogor. Whilst data remains unreliable, director Lucky Kuswandi has recently claimed that only 13 percent of the population have access to a cinema.[50] While the capital is well-served, Indonesians living in smaller cities and towns and rural areas have very limited access to cinemas. The dispersion of cinemas nationally points to the imbalances in the exhibition market place at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Sudwikatmono was one of many crony businessmen brought to the brink of bankruptcy due to the Financial Crisis. Bank Subentra and Bank Surya which he co-owned were liquidated in April 1998 under the Indonesian government's bank rationalization program unable to pay 1.88 trillion rupiah (approx. USD 188 million) in debt. Sudwikatmono divested himself of much of his business empire, either selling it or passing ownership to his son Agus Lasmono. Lasmono took over Indika, with its interests in entertainment, mining, petrochemicals, hotels, and property and in 2016 was worth USD 550 million, making him the sixty-ninth wealthiest Indonesian.[51] He took a lead role in SCTV, and after the station went public in 2002, he served as independent commissioner from 2000 to 2004. Benny Suherman was under investigation for financial irregularities in a fraud case in 1997, and after

46. "Insan film mengetuk DPR," *Tempo*, July 6, 1991.
47. "Small Movie Theaters Struggle in Jakarta," *The Jakarta Post*, September 14, 1997.
48. "Small Movie Theaters Struggle in Jakarta," *The Jakarta Post*, September 14, 1997.
49. KPPU, "Putusan: Perkara Nomor: 05/KPPU-L/2002," Jakarta: Komisi Pengawas Persaingan Usaha, 2002, 29.
50. Ilyas Istianur Praditya, "87% Penduduk Indonesia Belum Pernah Nonton Bioskop," *Liputan 6*, August 4, 2015. http://bisnis.liputan6.com/read/2286179/87-penduduk-indonesia-belum-pernah-nonton-bioskop.
51. "150 Richest Indonesians," *GlobeAsia*, June 2016. http://www.globeasia.com/globeasia-lists/150-richest-indonesians/.

fleeing Indonesia, installed his children as directors of the 21 Group companies.[52] From this period, Suherman's son Suryo Suherman and Harris Lasmana emerged as the principal operators of the 21 Cinemas under the new company name PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya. Most significantly, the end of the New Order and the exit of Sudwikatmono from the Cinema 21 Group delinked the latter from its patronage relationship with the president and pushed the company much more into a business environment increasingly dictated by competition and market relations. Despite the turmoil of 1997–1998, the Cinema 21 Group retained significant market clout not just as the dominant cinema chain in the country, but also as the sole importer of first-run Hollywood films into Indonesia.

As the economy stabilized into the 2000s, there was renewed business interest in the exhibition sector as movie-going re-emerged as a popular activity again, especially for young Indonesians. In 2005, an ethnic Chinese entrepreneur named Suryadi Yakin began importing Chinese films and opened the small M2 Surya twin cinema in Mangga Dua, North Jakarta. M2 Surya screens mainly Hong Kong and Korean films and caters to ethnic Chinese who live in the area. Another businessman in Makassar opened the Swe Tze cinemas, but struggled to supply his cinema with Hollywood films since his cinema was in competition with the city's Cinema 21 brand theater located nearby. As single operations, neither of these two cinemas significantly challenged Cinema 21 due to their location and small size. Swe Tze was however engaged in direct competition with Cinema 21 in Makassar and found that he was denied film supply from the Cinema 21 Group.[53] Since then the numbers of cinemas have increased, with investment by Cinema 21 and the entry of new operators such that by May 2014 there were 210 cinemas in Indonesia with 899 screens. Although numbers are now increasing, there are one-tenth the number of cinemas and one-third the number of screens compared to 1990.

Much of the shifting cinema landscape over the past twenty years has been driven by the closure of small, peripheral cinemas due to loss of business and bankruptcy. When asked about this in 2011, Secretary General of the GPBSI Tien Ali said: "It's just a matter of time before they close."[54] A movement of cinephiles and photographers have been trying to capture these cinemas before they disappear. For those that have remained in operation, the cinema halls have often become sites for prostitution and cruising for male-to-male sexual encounters. Recent media exposes on these aspects has brought this underground activity to public attention and placed them at risk due to the rise in religious conservatives targeting what they perceive as immoral activities.[55] However, it is expected that over time these cinemas will continue to close due to significant financial pressures.

52. Suryo Suherman and Melia Suherman. See KPPU, "Putusan," 19–20, 26.
53. KPPU, "Putusan," 35.
54. "Tinggal menunggu waktu untuk tutup." "Bioskop Tua Kian Lesu," *Tempo*, June 6, 2011.
55. See, for example, Faiq Hidayat, "Sisi gelap penuh lendir bioskop legendaris Senen," *Merdeka*, September 2, 2016. https://www.merdeka.com/khas/sisi-gelap-bioskop-legendaris-jakarta-kisah-bioskop-pinggiran-1.html; Ade Tanesia, "Demise of the People's Cinemas," *Latitudes* 25, 2003, 60–65.

Under the New Order, the Cinema 21 Group was largely protected by Harmoko, the minister of information, or defended by the GPBSI which was headed by Johan Tjasmadi who was uncritical of the Cinema 21 Group's monopoly practices. In one 1997 interview, Tjasmadi claimed simply that "the 21 Group's key to success is that it can provide better entertainment."[56] After 1998 however, the Cinema 21 Group lost the protection of the state that it had enjoyed under Sudwikatmono's tenure. In 2002, a decade after a public outcry by filmmakers at the Cinema 21 Group's monopoly practices, an investigation was launched by the Business Competition Supervisory Commission (KPPU, Komisi Pengawas Persaingan Usaha) into the ownership structures of the Cinema 21 Group. The KPPU investigation was instigated by a report written by the NGO Monopoly Watch in which the Cinema 21 Group was accused of being a monopoly and indulging in unfair business practices.[57] The case was made possible by the introduction of Law No. 5 of 1999 (UU No. 5 tahun 1999 Larangan Praktek Monopoli) which was instituted to break up existing business monopolies created under the New Order and to prevent the formation of new ones. It revealed how much had changed in Indonesia after 1998 that an NGO could file such a case against a former crony which had enjoyed ministerial protection under the New Order for over a decade.

In the KPPU investigation, connections between the 21 Group companies comprising PT Camila Internusa Film, PT Satrya Perkasa Esthetika Film, and PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya (formerly PT Subentra Nusantara) were investigated. Of particular focus were the cross-ownership patterns of the three above-mentioned 21 Group companies and cinemas and distributor companies in other provinces (see Table 5.1). Also of interest was the limited ability of other importers and cinema owners to establish and operate viable business in a market dominated by one single group. This was true of the complainant from Makassar who had set up the Swe Tze Cinema near to the 21 Group cinema but was unable to source first-run Hollywood films from the 21 Group who are the sole importers of Hollywood films. PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya were found guilty of violating paragraph 27 of the law which stipulates that an owner cannot have interests in a number of companies that operate in the same industry. It was shown to be particularly true in Surabaya, where their partnership with local operator PT Sanggar Film (Bambang Widianto) meant together they controlled more than 50 percent of the local market. Suryo Suherman and Harris Lasmana nominally withdrew from many of these associated companies installing family members and associates in their place. The 21 Group was largely cleared of monopoly practices as defined by the law.

What the KPPU investigation showed—at least—was that the 21 Group had lost some of its indemnity and protection, even if the ensuing KPPU investigation

56. "Small Theaters Struggle in Jakarta," *The Jakarta Post*, September 14, 1997.

57. See Monopoly Watch, "Monopoli Bioskop 21 Cineplex Group. Position Paper 004/MW/VII/2002.," Jakarta, 2002; Nugroho Dewanto, Eduardus Karel Dewanto, and Iwan Setiawan, "Dominasi, Bukan Monopoli," *Tempo*, April 7, 2003.

Table 5.1: Ownership structure of Cinema 21 Group companies and regional cinemas as of 2002

Company	Business/Location	Ownership	Board Members
PT Satrya Perkasa Esthetika	Jakarta—import and distribution	Jimmy Harianto (50%) Ruben Muljadi (50%)	Jimmy Herjanto, Prapti Rahayu, Arief Purnama, Ruben Muljadi
PT Camila Internusa Film	Jakarta—import and distribution		Harris Lasmana, Chand Parwez Servia
PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya (formerly PT Subentra Nusantara)	21 cinemas (63 locations)	PT Harkatjaya Bumipersada (80%) PT Adi Pratama Nusantara (20%)	Harris Lasmana, Melia Suherman, Arief Suherman, Suryo Suherman, Tri Rudy Anitio
PT Sanggar Usaha Mandiri	Citra 21 Semarang	66.7% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Sardjono Poetranto, Harris Lasmana, Jimmy Harianto, Suryo Suherman, Samuel Budiyanto, Bambang Widianto
PT Kartika Insani Raya	Hollywood KC 21 Jakarta	70% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Jimmy Harianto, Harris Lasmana, Gobind Punjabi, Suryo Suherman, Samuel Budiyanto, Raam Punjabi, Rakhee Punjabi.
PT PAN Mitra Sembada	6 cinemas in Sumatra, Batam and Sulawesi.	66.7% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Alexander Tedja, Jimmy Harianto, Suryo Suherman, Harris Lasmana
PT Gading Adi Permai	Gading 21 Jakarta	50% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Lioe Lukman Aripin, Harris Lasmana, Suryo Suherman, Tien Ali, C. Gunawan, Edy Suhardjo
PT Kharisma Maju Abadi	8 cinemas in West Java including Bandung and Cirebon	70% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Chand Parwez, Jimmy Harianto, Samuel Budiyanto, Suryo Suherman, Harris Lasmana, Muhsin Nisar
PT Perisai Permata Buana	5 cinemas in Medan and Banda Aceh	75% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Elson, Harris Lasmana, Jimmy Harianto, Suryo Suherman, Samuel Budiyanto
PT Intra Mandiri	12 cinemas in Surabaya and Denpasar.	98% PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya	Harris Lasmana, Jimmy Harianto, Samuel Budiyanto, Suryo Suherman, Ruben Muljadi
PT LIA Anugerah Semesta	8 cinemas in West Java		Jhonny Pondanga, Harris Lasmana, Jimmy Harianto, Suryo Suherman, Ruben Mulyadi, Samuel Budiyanto

did not prove that they were engaging in unfair or monopoly practices. In a curious statement, head of the GPBSI H. Djonny Syafruddin commented on the KPPU's findings saying:

> Now there is no monopoly at all. But, back in the 80s it's true there was a monopoly because of the familial connection between the owner of 21 and the state. And not just 21, all of it was monopolized. After *reformasi*, over the course of ten years, all this has changed.[58]

In effect, Syafruddin was admitting what previous heads of the GPBSI had long denied that under the New Order the film industry was monopolized by the 21 Group via Sudwikatmono. However, his narrow definition of monopoly—state patronage via familial connection—belies the fact that the market position, market practices, and management of the 21 Group after 1998 remained largely the same. Monopoly as defined by the KPPU largely concentrates on formal details such as official ownership structures, not on how a business is managed or how it exercises its position in the market place. Some of the names listed as members of the 21 Group's management are "office boys" pseudonyms used to populate the management structure. What the KPPU did not investigate were the collusive and oligopolistic business practices in the Indonesian film industry, even if their businesses in a formal sense remained separate. These realities would be revealed with the arrival of rival cinema operator Blitz Megaplex in 2006.

The Arrival of Blitz Megaplex

Serious competition to the 21 Group's dominance of the exhibition sector came with the arrival of the new high-end cinema chain Blitz Megaplex in 2006. Blitz Megaplex launched as an alternative to the Cinema 21 chain, especially 21's more upmarket XXI brand of cinemas. By targeting high-end or "A class" cinemas, Blitz was in direct competition with the Cinema 21 Group which had dominated this sector almost unopposed since the early 1990s. These cinemas screened mostly Hollywood films with the highest ticket prices. Blitz followed Cinema 21's lead by opening cinemas in high-end shopping malls, which were becoming more prominent in major cities as the economy stabilized in the decade after the financial crisis. In response, the 21 Group began closing underperforming cinemas and upgrading many of their cinemas to the "XXI" and "Premiere" brands in Jakarta and in other cities. Blitz presented serious competition to Cinema 21 and the competition began to alter the exhibition sector.

58. Quoted in "Sejarah Grup 21Cineplex," *Warta Ekonomi*, June 2009, 49. "Sekarang tidak ada monopoli sama sekali. Tapi, dulu tahun 80-an benar ada monopoli karena ada hubungan kerabat antara pemilik 21 dan kekuasaan, dan bukan cuma 21, dulu semua dimonopoli. Pasca reformasi melalui proses 10 tahun semua berubah."

Blitz Megaplex opened its first cinema to much fanfare in the city of Bandung, four hours' drive south of Jakarta. Since the 1970s, Bandung had been the sole domain of theatre owner and distributor Chand Parwez Servia (Kharisma Jabar). Today, Servia is more well-known as the owner of production company Kharisma Starvision. When I asked him about the arrival of Blitz, he said that the competition was good and ultimately benefited the audience.[59] As with the 21 Group's general response to Blitz, Parwez upgraded a number of his 21-brand cinemas and shut down cinemas that were underperforming. What annoyed him, he told me, was that Blitz arrived proclaiming themselves as better, rather than as an alternative. He felt they had not given him recognition as the established cinema operator in the city. Soon after, Blitz opened two more cinemas in high-end Jakarta malls, one in the new Plaza Indonesia and another in Pacific Place, and by December 2014 Blitz was operating twelve cinemas across the archipelago.[60] In some locations, Blitz occupied a new mall across from a mall containing a Cinema 21 cinema. Ananda Siregar, the Blitz CEO, acknowledged that entering the cinema business—especially in Indonesia where the 21 Group had effective control of both the distribution and exhibition market—"is bound to be a tough battle."[61]

Blitz's problems began when it struggled to supply its cinemas with films, especially those from local producers. Parwez, also a producer, claims he initially supplied films to Blitz, but stopped when he found that they were also reviewing films on their website, which he felt was not appropriate for a cinema company to be doing. However, it soon became apparent that none of the large producers were supplying films to Blitz. In 2007, of the forty-eight local films released that year, only nine played in Blitz cinemas, and all of these came from small, independent producers.[62] When local production increased in 2008, of the sixty-nine films released up to October 22, sixty-seven played in 21 Group cinemas, and only fifteen in Blitz.[63] In particular, *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (discussed in the previous chapter), which was seen by over 3.7 million people, was only exhibited in 21 Group cinemas.[64] Blitz offered digital screening as a means of attracting local filmmakers who could not afford the high costs of transfer to celluloid. Many smaller producers took this opportunity, but they sold very few tickets due to the lack of marketing and publicity, big name stars, and limited screens.

59. Personal interview, July 17, 2008.
60. In Bandung, Jakarta, Serpong, Bekasi, West Java, Balikpapan and Batam.
61. Andy Mukherjee, "Indonesia Has Many Hedge Funds, Few Risk Takers," 2006. http://www.bloomberg.com.
62. *Long Road to Heaven* (Enison Sinaro, 2007), *Naga Bonar Jadi 2* (Deddy Mizwar, 2007), *3 Hari untuk Selamanya* (Riri Riza, 2007), *Opera Jawa* (Garin Nugroho, 2007), *Koper* (Richard Oh, 2007), *The Jak* (Andibactiar Yusuf, 2007), and *Quickie Express* (Dimas Djayadiningrat, 2007).
63. The two films that did not play in 21 were *Kita Punya Bendera* (Steven Purba, 2008) a digital production, and *Kantata Takwa* (Eros Djarot and Gotot Prakosa, 2008). The makers of *Kantata Takwa* were renowned critics of 21 and the New Order from the early 1990s.
64. Rusdi Mathari, "Ayat-Ayat Monopoli Bioskop." *Rusdi GoBlog*, 2008. http://rusdimathari.wordpress.com/2008/03/22/ayat-ayat-monopoli-bioskop/.

As news about Blitz's difficulties reached the media, Cinema 21 Group spokesperson Noorca Massardi asserted that "there is no monopoly" and argued that distribution is a matter between individual producers and cinemas.[65] Yet this belies the fact that the big producers have a long personal and professional history with Cinema 21 and many of the new, smaller producers who wanted audiences feared retaliation from Cinema 21 if they screened their films in Blitz. Producer Erwin Arnada from Rexinema for instance says:

> My films previously played in 21, not in Blitz. It is more a commercial evaluation. Of course it is better if both of them screen it. The more outlets there are the better it is for the producer.[66]

His sentiment was echoed by director Viva Westi:

> At the moment we can all say that if we supply Blitz, 21 will not be happy. There is a monopoly or whatever we don't really know what is going on there. For me, I'd prefer to go with 400 cinemas and be watched by lots of people rather than 3 cinemas [of Blitz]. The ambition of a director is to have audiences watch what she has made [so] audiences can receive what the maker wants to express.[67]

During my research, many people hinted that local producers were intimidated by the 21 Group, a charge the 21 Group has always denied. One producer with a smaller company hinted at this when I spoke to him:

> if we basically give Blitz the same copy as 21, the 21 Group will . . . they have power to do something to our movie. And without the support of the 21 Group, we can't do much. And that's a business decision.

Although on paper, the 21 Group controls only 70 percent of the nation's cinemas, its near-total dominance of the modern, air-conditioned cinemas where Indonesian producers want to screen underpins this so-called "business decision." Some of the more vocal and independent producers and filmmakers such as Nia Dinata, Mira Lesmana, and Deddy Mizwar have, however, successfully screened their films in both 21 Group cinemas and Blitz cinemas.

When *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* was released, Blitz Megaplex only operated at three sites concentrated in Jakarta and Bandung; it would open a fourth in the Mall of Indonesia in July 2008. Given their size, it is hard to see why the 21 Group and

65. "21 Cineplex Dituduh Monopoli Hak Tayang Film Nasional," *Republika*, October 20, 2009. http://www.republika.co.id/.

66. "Film-film saya juga kemarin ditayangkan di 21, tidak di Blitz. Karena lebih kepada perhitungan-perhitungan kommersial saja. Tapi memang akan lebih enak kalau dua-duanya memutar. Semakin banyak outletnya semakin bagus buat produser" Erwin Arnada, personal interview, June 16, 2008.

67. "Untuk saat ini kita semua bisa bilang bahwa begitu kita masuk dengan Blitz, 21 tidak akan senang. Itulah adanya monopoli atau apa kita nga tahu di belakang. Tapi kalau aku lebih baik memilih 400 bioskop dan ditonton oleh banyak orang dibandingkan tiga bioskop ini. Karena cita-cita seorang sutradara adalah penonton bisa melihat apa yang dia buat, penonton bisa mendapatkan apa yang ingin disampaikan oleh si pembuat." Viva Westi, personal interview, June 5, 2008.

its partners would eschew Blitz for reasons of competition, although Blitz were encroaching on the high-end market which the 21 Group was also trying to cultivate. When I asked film director Rudi Soedjarwo for his thoughts on the matter, he suggested the following:

> This is what makes 21 afraid I think. If 21 wants to build a new cinema they have to wait for a mall to be built. They [the capital behind Blitz] can make mall. These guys can make mall. That's the threat for 21; that I am sure of.[68]

It not only takes a lot of capital to build a cineplex but to convince a mall owner to lease an area to a new cinema operator with little track record suggests that Blitz not only had significant capital behind it, but significant clout that helped to convince mall owners to lease space to a small cinema operator rather than the established 21 Group. It is this combination of capital and network sway that scares the 21 Group, especially since they no longer enjoy state patronage.

Yet even as the *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* case became public with Blitz raising their concerns in the media, the only names associated with them were manager Ananda Siregar and marketing manager Wendy Soewono. Despite the attention they were getting, Blitz remained secretive about the company's details, including who was behind them and who the owners and investors were in PT Graha Layar Prima, their parent company. Little detail was provided about how such a large operation could suddenly appear and build high end cinemas in a market dominated by one group with strong links to both the government and the main players in the film industry. Seemingly just another young entrepreneur, Siregar held significant pedigree within the world of Indonesian government and business and over time, details of their connections to big business and the military would emerge.

Ananda Siregar is a young banker and graduate of the University of Chicago. He is part of a new generation of foreign-educated businessmen, with connections to the old conglomerates and networks of power in Indonesia. His father, Arifin M. Siregar, was central bank governor (1983–1988), minister of trade (1988–1993), and ambassador to the USA (1993–1997). As minister of trade, Arifin Siregar oversaw the 1992 decision that officially handed the import monopoly to the 21 Group companies.[69] After graduation, Ananda Siregar worked in the National Bank Restructuring Agency (BPPN, Badan Penyehatan Perbankan Nasional) that was established in 1998 following the collapse of Indonesia's banks in the Asian financial crisis. Blitz's investment came through Singapore-based Quvat Management, a company run by Siregar's friend Thomas Trikasih Lembong, with an investment portfolio of half a billion dollars. Lembong was a business consultant who in 2002 had helped orchestrate the Djarum Group's (brothers Budi Hartono and Bambang

68. Personal interview, July 19, 2008.

69. See the correspondence between Minister of Trade, Arifin Siregar and US Ambassador Carla A. Hills. "Indonesia Conditions for Market Access for Films And Videos," Office of Trade Agreements Negotiations and Compliance. http://tcc.export.gov/Trade_Agreements/All_Trade_Agreements/exp_005435.asp.

Hartono) takeover of BCA, one of Indonesia's largest commercial banks. In August 2015, Lembong was appointed minister for trade under President Joko Widodo and served until July 2016. Blitz's key figures, therefore, seemed to bring in a new kind of investment and business paradigm that was very different to the owners and operators of cinemas in the past, including the 21 Group.

Given that Blitz were struggling to supply their cinemas with films, they took their case to the KPPU in 2009 accusing the 21 Group of operating in collaboration with four distributors and six production companies. After assessing the case, the KPPU rejected the petition from Blitz. However, the KPPU case revealed the first name of a board member, that of AM Hendropriyono as president commissioner (he served from 2009 to 2012). Hendropriyono is a retired Special Forces (KOPASSUS) four-star general and was a prominent military commander during the New Order. He earned the moniker "Butcher of Lampung" following a 1989 military raid on the Islamic village of Talangsari in South Sumatra, and in 1999 led the army's brutal attempts to retain East Timor.[70] After Suharto's demise, Hendropriyono was briefly a minister of transmigration in President Habibie's cabinet (1998–1999) before entering business. In 2014, he was an advisor to President-elect Joko Widodo, but not given a cabinet position due to his human rights record. Despite his controversial record, Hendropriyono no doubt gave Blitz Megaplex access to key businessmen, conglomerates, officials, and military figures that Blitz could use to expedite and develop their cinema business.

In 2014, Blitz Megaplex listed on the Jakarta stock exchange, hoping to raise IDR 462 billion (USD 40.9 million) to further their expansion plans. These included building cinemas in Surabaya, East Java; Yogyakarta; Cirebon and Karawang, in West Java. South Korea's largest cinema company CJ-CGV bought a 59 percent stake expanding their global reach that includes cinemas in China, Turkey, Myanmar, Vietnam, and the United States.[71] Buying into Blitz was also a way for CJ to enter Indonesia's production market which they have realized recently by co-producing Joko Anwar's *A Copy of My Mind* (2015) and *Pengabdi Setan* (*Satan's Slaves*, 2017), and Ody Harahap's *Sweet 20* (2017), amongst others. Blitz Megaplex cinemas are now branded CGV Blitz. A further 22.25 percent is publicly traded on the Indonesian stock market. Other names of the Blitz board were revealed in this process including Rosihan Arsyad as Independent Commissioner, a retired Air Force commander and former governor of South Sumatra province (1998–2003), and Bernard Kent Sondakh as president director of PT Graha Layar Prima since 2013. Sondakh was head of staff for the Indonesian Navy from 2002 to 2005. Alongside Hendropriyono

70. Richard Tanter, Gerry van Klinken, and Desmond Ball, eds. *Masters of Terror: Indonesia's Military and Violence in East Timor* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 97.

71. According to media reports, 44.25 percent was bought directly by CGV whilst another 14.75 percent was bought by a Hong Kong based company called IKT Holdings Limited. IKT Holdings is owned by the CJ-CGV Group. This was to avoid the foreign ownership rules that disallows a single foreign company owning more than 50 percent of the stock.

who served until 2012 on the board, Blitz Megaplex displayed clear associations with former military men who went into business in the post-1998 era.

Far from being a new and thus powerless cinema chain, Blitz is a well-connected enterprise. In 2008, when Blitz opened a cinema in the new luxurious Mall of Indonesia in Central Jakarta, they obtained this prime real estate no doubt because of their personal connection to the Djarum Group who own the mall. The revelation of high-ranking military personnel on successive boards further reveals the strong backing of Blitz Megaplex, not only to the military but by extension to New Order political and economic interests. Whilst the 21 Group also has owners linked to the military, they are no longer as powerful and connected as they once were, since their investment was through Sudwikatmono's connections.[72] Currently the 21 Group relies on a much more industry specific oligopoly and exerts much more pressure within the film industry. These are the realities of the post-1998 economy, where personal connections to powerful individuals and through them to political figures has become integral to how businesses interests are developed in the liberalized economy.

Big Capital, New Players

Even though Cinema 21 has been decoupled from its crony relationship and had to share the cinema market with new operators, it is still able to exert significant market power due to its size, operational reach, and ongoing control of Hollywood imports into the country. This was demonstrated in 2011 when an audit by the Director General of Tax and Excise (Direktorat Jenderal Bea dan Cukai) found that the three 21 Group–linked importers (PT Camila Internusa Film, PT Amero Mitra Film, and PT Satrya Perkasa Esthetika Film) had not paid the required taxes on film they had imported. Together, the 21 Group importers owed around IDR 30 billion in taxes (USD 2.3 million) and additional fines of 1,000 percent. Instead of paying the back taxes and associated fines, the 21 Group instead set up a new importer called PT Omega Film headed by Ajay Fulwani, Harris Lasmana's nephew. At the end of February 2011, the 21 Group stopped distributing MPAA films to domestic cinemas, forcing cinemas to play films from South Korea, Hong Kong, and other countries with many Indonesians forced to fly to Singapore to catch the latest Hollywood blockbusters. It threw the exhibition sector into crisis as exhibitors scrambled to source film supply and faced angry consumers who wanted to watch the latest Hollywood release but were unable to do so.

As the standoff continued between the tax office and the Cinema 21 Group, it became clear that Cinema 21 still had significant influence. Their actions forced the Indonesian government to act on an age-old problem of taxes in the film industry. Local filmmakers have complained for a long time about the discrepancy between

72. Sudwikatmono died January 8, 2011.

taxes they pay compared to taxes on imported films, meaning that local producers are disadvantaged in their own market.[73] A new tax regime was discussed and a new import tax was announced of IDR 21,458/minute (previously IDR 13,000/minute) plus tax on royalties. Minister of Culture and Tourism Jero Wacik, who has authority over the film industry, announced that the 21 Group could begin importing again, even though they had not cleared their back taxes, only to be contradicted by Agus Marwardojo, the finance minister. Agus Marwardojo remained concerned about import monopolization and wanted to see more importers and more transparency in the film market. He also suggested that international film companies open offices in Indonesia to bypass local importers and deal directly with Indonesian cinemas. The 21 Group's operations were further hampered when PT Omega Film was blocked from obtaining an import license, but this was soon lifted and they were able to import MPAA films including *Transformers 3: Dark of the Moon* (Michael Bay, 2011) on July 19, 2011 and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: *Part 2* (David Yates, 2011) on July 29, 2011, about six months after imports had been halted.

It was apparent that the 21 Group had successfully maneuvered the tax controversy by establishing PT Omega Film to supersede its existing import companies. It was common knowledge that Omega was another iteration of the 21 Group and solved none of the underlying structural problems. Such criticisms were deflected by Djonny Syafruddin who defended Omega as importer of MPAA films, saying it is up to MPAA and the ownership of Omega should not matter. When *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part Two* screened, it marked the resumption of MPAA films in Indonesia. Audiences queued for two days to get tickets, and film operations have returned to normal in the years since. What the whole 21 Group tax episode showed was the continuing market power of Cinema 21 as the gateway to MPAA films and the difficulty in dislodging them from that position. Seen to be protected by GPBSI and Jero Wacik, despite Jero Wacik coming into conflict with the Ministry of Finance. Not only was the Cinema 21 Group able to out-maneuver the law and state agencies, they retain their dominant position as sole importer of MPAA films. Other operators remain dependent on 21 Group importers for their supplies of MPAA films meaning that any expansion in the exhibition sector will almost always benefit the Cinema 21 Group as well.

In the wake of the import tax saga, three new cinema operators have appeared backed by big domestic capital. Raam Punjabi, who despite developing a significant presence in production, has remained invested in exhibition. Through his Tripar Multivision company, Punjabi launched the Platinum Cineplex brand cinemas in 2012. Operating at the *kabupaten* (sub-district) level, Platinum Cineplex aims to serve the middle to lower income market. Claiming to be an "international cinema

73. See, for example, Lisabona Rahman, "Deddy Mizwar-Rudy Sanyoto: Meluruskan Masalah Film Impor," *Film Indonesia*, February 22, 2011. http://filmindonesia.or.id/article/deddy-mizwar-rudy-sanyoto-meluruskan-masalah-film-impor.

theater," Platinum operates cinemas in Bitung (Sulawesi), Magelang (Central Java), Solo (Central Java), Cibinong (Bogor), and Sidoarjo (East Java). Its international credentials come from Platinum having expanded to other Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, and East Timor with plans to open cinemas in Laos. Punjabi is expanding his business operations beyond Indonesia, by taking advantage of the growing cinemas markets in the newly developing Southeast Asian economies.

Two other cinema operators have emerged linked to property development companies. The Lippo Group conglomerate owned by the Riady family opened their own brand of Cinemaxx cinemas in August 2014. Lippo is a large banking, property, and media group with long business connections to the New Order through the family's patriarch Mochtar Riady. As the Lippo company has expanded its portfolio of shopping malls over the past ten years, they have sought to populate them with their own cinemas. As of June 2015 they operate 11 cinemas with 60 screens, and plan to open over 300 cinemas with a total of 2,000 screens in the decade ahead in eighty-five of the country's biggest cities. The group projects investing half a billion US dollars in exhibition. Agung Sedayu has also opened its own brand of Flix Cinemas in two of its shopping malls in South Bekasi (Grand Galaxy Park) and North Jakarta (PIK Avenue). It signals more competition in the middle to upper class segment as the number of shopping malls increase across the country as the most prolific paradigm of investment and retail development.

A fourth operator has also emerged targeting the rural and second tier cities in East Java including Bondowoso, Banjar, Bojonegoro, Banyuwangi, and Ciamis. Known as New Star Cineplex (NSC), this small regional chain of cinemas is the successful rebranding of the New Kusuma Cinema in Jember. Established in 1952 as the Ambassador Cinema, it remained in operation until the 1990s when it and other local cinemas in Jember closed down. In 2005, it was reopened with new investment followed by rapid expansion. As of 2018, NSC operate fifteen cinemas. NSC are the most successful of the new regional cinemas that include new operators in Malang, Semarang, Purwokerto, and Pekalongan. On the island of Bali, four cinemas were opened by the Bali Cineplex in 2009, but were later bought out by the 21 Group.

In a move to counter the increased competition and to fund its own expansions and upgrades, Cinema 21 (PT Nusantara Sejahtera Raya) announced at the end of 2016 that Singapore's GIC (Government Investment Corporation) were investing IDR 3.5 trillion (USD 265 million) for a 25 percent stake in its operations. This massive injection of capital, far out stripping CGV's investment in Blitz, brings much needed liquidity into the Cinema 21 Group. Cinema 21's rapid expansion and modernization program over the past decade has not only been expensive, but was not producing the cash flow necessary to sustain further expansion, as evidenced by the tax saga of 2011 when it was apparent that Cinema 21 actually could not afford to pay its tax bill. Moreover, the Cinema 21 Group is no longer able to borrow capital through crony connections like it could during its initial expansion phase

in the late 1980s and 1990s. The Cinema 21 Group was desperate for capital to continue its expansion program, especially now in the face of intense competition from domestic and international players with deep pockets. During the announcement of the GIC-21 deal, Benny Suherman reappeared as the face of the 21 Group, marking his public comeback after he fled Indonesia in 1998 for misappropriating bank bailout money.

Cinemas into the Future

Investment in Indonesia's cinemas by domestic and foreign capital indicates a growing interest in Indonesia's film industry and its potential as a significant market in the decades ahead. With a population of 264 million people, Indonesia will potentially rival Japan, South Korea, and Mexico in terms of audience numbers. In 2016 President Joko Widodo signed the Perpres No. 44 Tahun 2016 which allows for foreign owners and operators to establish cinemas in the country. South Korea's Lotte Group has since announced its plans to established cinemas in Indonesia. The same year, President Widodo announced a plan to build 2,000 new cinemas across the archipelago by 2018 as part of the government's new creative industries initiatives. Yet as of 2018, the number of cinemas in Indonesia remains small. Given the current market and rate of investment this seems unlikely. According to data in Table 5.2, Indonesia had only 288 cinemas with 1,228 screens as of June 2016, increasing by about 200 screens by January 2018.

Even with the presence of CGV Blitz, Platinum Cineplex, Lippo Cinemaxx, and New Star Cineplex, Cinema 21 remains the dominant exhibitor in the country controlling around 75 percent of the exhibition market. With its ongoing control of imports of Hollywood films into the country, the infrastructure of the film industry continues to echo the political economy of the New Order.

For local filmmakers, growth and diversification in the exhibition sector is welcomed. For many it is too slow and current operators lack an in-depth knowledge of

Table 5.2: Number of cinemas and screens by operator

Operator	Theaters (June 2016)	Screens (June 2016)	Screens (January 2018)
Cinema 21	217	883	900
CGV-Blitz	21	148	256
Cinemaxx	19	102	120
Independent	19	58	116
Platinum Cineplex	5	21	28
New Star Cineplex	7	16	24
TOTAL	288	1,228	1,444

the market and consumption patterns. In 21 Group cinemas at least, films are often blanket released across 100 to 150 cinemas at the same time, aiming to capture a large audience quickly through saturation. This pushes out films already in cinemas, especially smaller productions that may attract a small but niche audience. The potential for audience segmentation remains under-developed and some filmmakers such as Joko Anwar have publicly warned that the blanket release policy lacks any form of quality control and that this risks undermining the perception of local production in the eyes of local audiences.[74] Local filmmakers remain frustrated at the lack of cinemas in the country,[75] and the uneven playing field they encounter when trying to screen their films to an audience to maximize their return on investment.

New technologies of screening such as online-streaming and mobile platforms are yet to make a significant impact with internet infrastructure still unreliable, even in the capital of Jakarta. Traditional *layar tancap* (mobile screens) have been considered as an alternative way of screening, but producers in Jakarta are largely cut-off from the few remaining operators and income would not be that significant. Clearly the potential is there for Indonesian filmmakers and producers to earn more income from their films if only the channels of distribution and exhibition can make their films more accessible to more people. For now, filmmakers must be content with a limited number of cinemas and intense competition resulting in rapid turnover of titles. As this chapter has indicated, there are legacy relationships between Cinema 21 and a group of producers which further limits access to cinemas, and as the next chapter details, forms an oligopoly.

74. Joko Anwar, "Karya Idealis dan Karya Komersial," *Rolling Stone*, October 28, 2010.
75. Producer Shanker RS was quite emphatic on this point when I interviewed him.

6
Producing an Oligopoly

Structures of Pop Culture

As much as we may idealize pop culture as a free marketplace offering products to consumers, the market and the culture industries are structured by institutions, relationships, influence, and connections. Making and selling pop culture is incredibly risky due to rapid turnover, changing fashions and technologies, and vagaries of consumer taste. Risks can be managed or minimized by investing in marketing, controlling distribution channels, or investing in well-known stars who can guarantee an audience. Being successful in pop culture means not only making a product that is relevant and palatable to audiences, but also being able to gain advantage and influence within the political economy of the industry. Being able to wield power and influence provides privileged access to distribution channels, and conversely may inhibit others from reaching their intended audience if they do not have influence and power. Before a film reaches the cinemas, there is a long process of preparation, securing funding, engaging equipment and manpower, securing locations, and so on. Typically, films have a specific and limited first release point—cinemas—which can be a highly contested space as producers vie for screening slots and for screening dates that will maximize their returns. Knowing how to navigate these processes can give advantage to certain players within the market.

Many assumed that after *reformasi*, Indonesia became an open and free market, unhindered by state regulations and predatory businesses owned by political cronies.[1] Publicized incidents like the collapse of Sudwikatmono's business empire seemed to herald an end to New Order business networks. While on the one hand, *reformasi* allowed new players into the film market, with many taking advantage of a more open economy and the retreat of the state, on the other hand, remnants of the New Order film industry did not entirely disappear. As noted in Chapter 2, many old producers made their return to the film industry after 2003 and have since dominated local production. The contemporary Indonesian film industry therefore

1. Christian Chua, *Chinese Big Business in Indonesia: The State of Capital* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008). Richard Robison and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

contains familiar players, individuals, and companies. *Reformasi* provided the space for new companies and filmmakers to enter filmmaking but they still had to contend with legacy structures, institutions, players, and individuals who remained in position of influence and power even if the terms of the industry had changed.

By 2008, it became evident that a handful of film companies with links to the New Order film industry had come to dominate domestic production. Over 60 percent of the total films produced in 2008 were from seven big companies: MVP (Multivision Plus), Kharisma Starvision, Rapi Films, Sinemart, Indika, Soraya Intercine, and MD Pictures. Of the seven, five were old production companies in business since the New Order and the other two (Sinemart and MD Pictures) were offshoots of New Order era companies (see Table 6.1 below). Although powerful during the New Order, these companies were subordinate to the state and to the interests of crony Sudwikatmono and his Cinema 21 Group. After *reformasi*, these companies have been able to return and now form an oligopoly within the commercial industry. Their position is facilitated by legacy relationships with the 21 Group whose cinemas are ubiquitous across large towns and cities in Indonesia, as discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter traces the origins of the oligopoly and analyses how a small group of producers have been able to sustain themselves for over forty years.

Dominance, Monopoly, Oligopoly

Historically, race has been the lens through which questions of dominance of the Indonesian film industry have been framed. Non-*pribumi* (non-native) commercial producers—namely producers of Chinese or Indian descent—have been accused of controlling the film industry for their own benefit. Their dominance, it is argued, comes at the expense of *pribumi* (native) producers and filmmakers because ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians have an innate ability for business, pursuing quick profit and mass audiences instead of quality, edification or nationalism. Such ideas linking race to predisposition in the film industry can be traced back to at least the 1950s when for example Usmar Ismail said Chinese producers "have the nose to immediately smell where money can be made and know as well how to exploit it."[2] After a number of ethnic Indians entered the film business in the late 1960s, they too were pejoratively characterized as "textile traders from Pasar Baru" implying they treated film simply as a trade commodity to be sourced at the lowest price and sold for maximum profit.[3] In both instances, ethnic Chinese and ethnic Indians were seen to treat film as a commodity rather than as a cultural resource, thereby limiting *pribumi* access to the industry and by extension preventing the emergence of *film nasional*, as discussed in Chapter 1.

2. Original reads: "punya hidung untuk segera mencium di mana untung bisa didapat dan tahu pula mengeksploatasikannya." Ismail, *Usmar Ismail Mengupas Film*, 53.
3. D. A. Peransi, *D.A. Peransi dan Film* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Film, 1997), 143.

Table 6.1: The seven major production companies in Indonesia as of 2008

Current Company	Founder/Owner	Established	Notes
Rapi Films	Gope Samtani Subagyo Samtani	1968 (import) 1971 (production)	Run by Sunil Samtani, Gope's son. Subagyo Samtani died in 2012.
Multivision Plus (MVP)	Raam Punjabi Gobind Punjabi (Dhamoo Punjabi)	1970 (import) 1971 (production)	Formerly PT Indako Film, Panorama Film, Parkit Films, and Tripar Film. Raam, Dhamoo and Gobind are brothers.
Soraya Intercine	Ram Soraya (Raam Lalchand Pridhani)	1972 (import) 1982 (production)	Began as film importer and distributor (1972–1982) before moving into production in 1982. Sons: Rocky Soraya and Sunil Soraya.
Indika Pictures	Indika Group (Sudwikatmono, Agus Lasmono)	1996	Formerly owned by Sudwikatmono; Agus Lasmono is his son. Producer Shanker RS (1999–2009). Current producer is Arifin Wiguna (2009–).
Starvision Plus	Chand Parwez Servia Fiaz Servia	1985 (cinemas) 1995 (production)	From 1967 Chand Parwez Servia worked in his family cinema business, before founding PT Kharisma Jabar Film in 1985 to distribute and exhibit films in West Java. Fiaz Servia is his son.
Sinemart	Leo Sutanto	2003	Formerly called Prima Entertainment and set up with Gunawan Sulaiman, a former SCTV executive. Leo Sutanto was a former manager for the Cinema 21 Group. In 2017, Surya Citra Media (SCM) owned by Eddy Sariaatmadja (Emtek) acquired 80% of the company.
MD Corp (includes MD Pictures)	Dhamoo Punjabi Manoj Punjabi	2006	Dhamoo Punjabi exited Multivision Plus in 2006 to establish MD Entertainment with his son, Manoj Punjabi.

There were historical reasons why the film industry was attractive as a field of business for ethnic minorities and why many became successful. Non-white minorities of migrant origin in the Dutch colonial economy were afforded limited opportunities and tended therefore to concentrate in trade centers engaging in import-export and trading, often leveraging their transnational connections to other communities in the region's port cities (Singapore, Manila, Georgetown, Bangkok) and to their home countries. When film emerged as a new form of entertainment in the early 1900s, members of the ethnic Chinese community saw opportunities in importing film as a new field of business. Chinese involvement in the film industry represented a continuation of their involvement in other forms of entertainment especially musical theatre troupes.[4] Ethnic Chinese tended to be wealthier than their native counterparts in the colonial economy, and being concentrated in the urban centers, also began to open cinemas and other entertainment venues. A number of ethnic Chinese had important connections to Shanghai which emerged as an important center of film production in the early twentieth century. Members of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese community became importers of silent films, owned cinemas, and later became film producers in the late 1920s.

Although a much smaller community compared to the ethnic Chinese, the so-called Indians are actually Sindhis originally from Sindh (around the city of Hyderabad in contemporary Pakistan). Sindhi traders came to Indonesia in the 1920s to trade and do business. Often circulating between other Southeast Asian cities and Hyderabad, Sindhis traded in textiles, sporting goods, and luxury items in the colonial and post-independence economy.[5] Sindhis began importing films in the late 1940s, mostly from India to provide entertainment for their own community. In the wake of the 1946 violence leading up to the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947, Sindhis came to settle in Indonesia permanently. Until then, members of the Sindhi community had been a community of itinerant, non-permanent traders in the coastal cities of Surabaya, Batavia (Jakarta), Medan, and Semarang. Sindhis have continued to maintain their niches in textiles, sporting goods, musical instruments, and luxury goods. In the 1950s, Jiwat KK through his Bola Dunia Film company began importing films from India for the growing cinema market in Indonesia.

Although ethnic Chinese would continue to thrive in the film business in the 1950s,[6] many Chinese suffered economically and lost ground in the film business following the economic and political events of the 1960s. While some Chinese continued to be important players in the New Order film industry—especially producers Ali Hasan (Inem Film), Hatoek Subroto (Elang Perkasa), Hendrick Gozali (PT Garuda Film), Ferry Angriawan (Virgo Putra), and Tien Ali (PT Cancer Mas

4. Cohen, *Komedie Stamboel*.
5. Maria Myutel, "Indians and National Television in Indonesia: Behind the Seen" (PhD diss., The Australian National University, 2016).
6. Armijn Pané, "Produksi Film Tjerita di Indonesia: Perkembangannja sebagai Alat Masjarakat," *Indonesia* 4, no. 1–2 (1953): 5–112.

Film)—it was the Sindhi producers who rose to much greater prominence during the New Order. Jiwat KK remained an important figure, but it was a younger group of ambitious Sindhis who began importing films in the late 1960s that would go on to form some of the main production companies of the New Order and post–New Order industries. Drawing on their communal networks for startup capital and business expertise, Sindhi businessmen found a new and important niche for themselves in importing films, not just titles from India which were popular with lower class audiences, but films from Europe and the United States.

Four young Sindhi men working as importers and traders in the textile markets of Pasar Baru became friends in the 1960s; Raam Punjabi, Harris Lasmana and brothers Gope T. Samtani and Shanker Samtani (often credited as Subagio S.). In his biography, Punjabi recalls feeling restless with traditional importing work but being intensely interested in cinema.[7] The Samtani brothers were the first to enter the film business in 1968 as importers and distributors, and established their own production company, Rapi Films, in 1971. Punjabi entered the importing business by buying the inactive importer Indako Film in 1970,[8] with his two brothers Dhamoo Punjabi and Gobind Punjabi. Companies operated by the Punjabi brothers would include Panorama Film, Parkit Films, Tripar Film, and later Multivision Plus (MVP). Lasmana meanwhile worked in other film companies before establishing his own production company PT Nusantara Film in 1976.

Although importing would remain a core component of their businesses, Sindhis would become more well-known as film producers, especially of mass-market commercial films. In 1972, the Punjabi brothers produced their first film, *Mama*, which was shot in 70mm with director Wim Umboh. The Punjabi brothers went on to make a number of the popular Warkop DKI comedies in the 1980s, many under the Parkit Films company which they established in 1981. Harris Lasmana produced a number of award-winning films including *R.A. Kartini* (Sjuman Djaya, 1982) and *Kembang Kertas* (*Paper Flower*, Slamet Rahardjo, 1984), as well as exploitation titles such as the dramas *Laki-laki dalam Pelukan* (*Men Embraced*, Bobby Sandy, 1977) and *Bahaya Penyakit Kelamin* (*The Dangers of Genital Diseases*, Motinggo Boesje, 1978). Lasmana became managing director of PT Camila Internusa Film (import and distribution company of Subentra) and in 1987, the managing director of PT Subentra Nusantara (21 Cinemas). Raam Punjabi describes the Cinema 21 directors Harris Lasmana and Benny Suherman as his "comrades."[9]

Due in part to the growing power of PT Suptan, importer-producers Parkit Films and Rapi Films looked towards developing an export strategy in the 1980s. Local titles such as *The Queen of Black Magic* (Lilik Sudjio, 1981) and *The Warrior* (Sisworo Gautama Putra, 1981) sold well on the exploitation market to distributors

7. Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi*, 101–6.
8. In 1974 due to a government regulation, Indako changed its name to PT Panorama Films.
9. "Teman seperjuangan saya, Benny Suherman dan Haris Lasmana." Endah, *Panggung Hidup Raam Punjabi*, 140.

in South America, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. As mentioned in Chapter 1, throughout the 1980s, both companies developed a similar mode of production, employing Caucasian extras and actors, with exploitation and special effects content. Fellow Sindhi and East Java distributor Ram Soraya would also move into production in 1983 with his Soraya Intercine company, targeting the mass market with exploitation titles. Export-orientated productions earned significant revenue, and by the early 1990s had budgets up to USD 1 million and engaged foreign actors.

Younger than this group, but one of the major players now with his Kharisma Starvision company, is Chand Parwez Servia. His brother owned cinemas in West Java, which Parwez worked in from 1967 before expanding their reach in 1985 through the PT Kharisma Jabar company, by monopolizing distribution and exhibition in West Java. These cinemas would become a part of the Cinema 21 Group in the 1990s. Servia says of himself:

> I start in cinemas from the third grade till high school and then I stopped because I need to go to university but at that time I still see everybody, see Raam [Punjabi], see Gope [Samtani]. People in the cinema business starting then . . . my brother started then. I'm always helping him. . . . My eldest brother is on Gope's age, Raam Punjabi's age. . . . I'm younger than them so . . . for me they are like my brothers. Harris Lasmana, maybe you know him also, the one who coming into 21. He is also like my mentor.[10]

Servia quickly expanded the cinema business to include distribution for the entire West Java region, and used this money to fund films:

> Before we do cinemas, we are funding Rapi Film, Parkit Film, Raam Punjabi and other's company. We give the money to . . . to ask them to create the movie that good for our market. Mostly it's good also for the market of Indonesia.[11]

In 1986, Servia himself became a producer with the help of East Java distributor Hatoek Subroto from Elang Perkasa Film. Servia's first film as producer *Pacar Pertama* (*First Girlfriend*, Sam Sarumpaet, 1986) was co-produced with Camila Internusa (21 Cinemas) then under Harris Lasmana. In 1995 Servia established Starvision Plus to begin supplying content to television stations beginning with the sitcom *Spontan* (*Spontaneous*, 1996–2002) for SCTV in 1996. Subroto had earlier produced films with Sudwikatmono including *Kawin Lari* (*Eloping*, Teguh Karya, 1974) and *Perkawinan dalam Semusim* (*Marriage in Season*, Teguh Karya, 1976).

When young Sindhis entered the film industry in the late 1960s as importers and into production in the 1970s, they were expanding the domain of business for their community.[12] At the same time, they were also entering a highly politicized

10. Personal interview, July 17, 2008.
11. Chand Parwez Servia, personal interview, July 17, 2008.
12. Anita Raina Thapan, *Sindhi Diaspora in Manila, Hong Kong and Jakarta* (Quezon City: ADMU Press, 2002), 33.

and sensitive culture industry. With their background in business and trading, with extensive transnational links and strong community networks, Sindhi importers and producers gained an advantage in an industry struggling in the late 1960s and often unpredictable in terms of success and returns. Yet with so much nationalist rhetoric about the film industry and its perceived site for nationalist economic and cultural expression, the presence of "foreigners" as powerful importers, distributors, and producers came to be seen as a threat and was a constant point of attack and criticism. Although rarely identified by name in writing, journalists, critics, and scholars wrote about "foreign" non-*pribumi* dominance, and how *pribumi* producers were unable to compete. Ethnic Chinese and Sindhis had an advantage since they came from trading communities, often spoke a foreign language (such as English or Chinese) and maintained important overseas links through transnational networks. Simultaneously, their relationship with the crony Sudwikatmono would come to play a significant role in their ability to dominate the Indonesian film industry during the New Order.

What set the Sindhis apart from others in the film industry is their belonging to a close-knit ethnic community that values business and wealth-creation. As the work of Maria Myutel has recently shown,[13] the Sindhi community in Indonesia is small, comprising no more than ten thousand individuals, yet they maintain their identity and homogeneity by practicing homogamy, maintaining Sindhi language, and developing community specific institutions such as the Gandhi Memorial School and religious temples. Although few in number, the Sindhis are nevertheless economically significant because of their transnational connections, and development of business niches. In these niches, Sindhi businesses will compete fiercely against each other but come together and work to undercut any outsiders who try to enter the niche.[14] At the same time, their networks are a source of support especially for capital and financing, helping Sindhi businesses establish themselves and expand nationally. Developing a business niche in film import and production would become a significant new business domain for Indonesia's Sindhis.

Sindhi businessmen in the New Order film industry came to occupy a powerful if conflicted position. They managed to maintain their positions as the dominant film producers in the country with ancillary business interests in importing, distribution, and exhibition. Additionally, they were often the subject of criticism in the media for being "foreigners" who controlled the film industry along with a number of ethnic Chinese producers. Yet like the ethnic Chinese, they remained subordinate to the business interests of Sudwikatmono and the Cinema 21 Group, whose expansion into import and exhibition ate into the business of the Sindhis. To outside observers, it appeared as if ethnic minority producers—Sindhis and Chinese—dominated the film industry. In reality, they were propping up and providing cover for the crony Sudwikatmono whose monopolization of a previously open market

13. Myutel, "Indians and National Television."
14. Myutel, "Indians and National Television."

was symptomatic of the New Order economy in which Suharto cronies came to control significant parts of the economy, often by partnering with politically weak but economically savvy ethnic minority businessmen.

Yet Sindhis managed to integrate themselves into the prevailing political economy of the New Order film industry, even if they were politically weak. One example of their integration was visible in the publication of *Majalah Film* (Film Magazine), a glossy film gossip and news publication covering both local and international entertainment news. *Majalah Film* was published by the *Pos Kota* (City Post) company owned by Harmoko who was a former journalist before serving as minister of information from 1983 to 1997. It was under his tenure that much of the expansion of the Cinema 21 Group was able to take place. *Majalah Film* listed its editors as Harris Lasmana, Chand Parwez Servia, and Jhonny Pondanga, then head of PT LIA Anugerah Semesta, operator of the Cinema 21 brand cinemas in South Jakarta. Day to day operations were managed by Johan Tjasmadi (GPBSI). The magazine not only promoted the interests of its members, but it also helped them control information circulating about the film industry, and gave form to the close relationships between the minister, film producers, the 21 Group, and the GPBSI, the industry body meant to represent cinema owners.

Making Fortunes, Making Connections

For the Sindhi producers, the arrival of private television in the early 1990s would provide means to overcome the constraints that restricted them in feature film, whilst simultaneously allowing them to expand and transform their businesses. Television paid more per hour of content, of which it needed much more than cinema. In 1985, PT Parkit Films (Raam Punjabi) made ten feature films equaling about fifteen hours of content; in television Multivision Plus (Raam Punjabi) would make about nine hundred hours of content per year or approximately seventeen hours per week. The amount of content that Multivision Plus would therefore be creating in the 1990s demanded that the company transform by investing in human resources and teams, developing streamlined production methods, and ensuring quality control. This would transform many of the film production companies into efficient and professional organizations. This transformed these production houses into substantial commercial operations and made their owners wealthy.

Up until 1989, the state broadcaster TVRI was the only terrestrial television station in Indonesia. Operated under the powerful Department of Information, alongside the national radio RRI and film production company PFN, TVRI was used for "the political processes of nation building and the construction and circulation of ideas of national culture."[15] TVRI programming was often educative and in

15. Philip Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture in Indonesia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000), 28.

the service of development and featured documentaries on transmigration, public health, and family planning. As an entertainment option, TVRI began to falter in the 1980s as its programming became duller and less focused on entertainment and its revenues contracted following a ban on advertising in 1981.[16] It did, however, pioneer a new kind of serialized format akin to soap opera that Ishadi SK, then head of TVRI, called *sinetron*. As discussed in Chapter 6, *sinetron* was closely associated with forms of story-telling that had been developed in films of the 1970s and 1980s and that were then transferred to the serialized television format.

In the 1980s, the information monopoly held by TVRI began to be challenged by cross-border broadcasts, satellite television, and home video technologies.[17] Unable to eradicate these technologies and fearful of them, the regime began opening broadcast space to private operators in an effort to introduce competition and deregulation into the media sector. The first broadcast license was given to RCTI (Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia) in 1989 to offer television broadcast only to those living in Jakarta via a special decoder and monthly subscription fee.[18] As a commercial station, RCTI focused on attracting and retaining audiences, by giving them what they wanted and imagining the audience-as-consumer. It marked a broader shift in how the new commercial television stations imagined their audiences—and how they would survey and measure them—in order to maximize their numbers. RCTI would also break TVRI's monopoly on television broadcasting, ushering in a new paradigm in television programming, and initiating a rapid liberalization of the broadcasting sector.[19] This has been called the "second phase" of television in Indonesia and the "first wave" of commercial television.[20]

In 1990–1991, two more stations were granted licenses and began broadcasting. SCTV (Surya Citra Televisi) was licensed in Surabaya under similar terms as RCTI in Jakarta. In August 1990, Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI) was licensed and began broadcasting in January 1991. TPI soon abandoned its initial pretense of being an educational broadcaster, especially with it taking on advertising instead became commercially and entertainment orientated. Over the next two years, new regulations were introduced that allowed their operators to become free-to-air national broadcasters. By March 1993, five stations were licensed for national broadcast: PT Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI), PT Cipta Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI), PT Indosiar Visual Mandiri (Indosiar), PT Cakrawala Andalas Televisi (ANTEVE), and PT Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV). Ownership patterns of the television stations would also follow the crony patterns of New Order business: RCTI was part owned by Suharto's son Bambang Trihatmodjo (Bimantara group),

16. Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture*, 68.
17. Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture*, 215–24.
18. Kitley *Television, Nation, and Culture*, 96.
19. Kitley *Television, Nation, and Culture*.
20. Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture*; Ed Hollander, Leen d'Haenens, and Jo Bardoel, "Television Performance in Indonesia: Steering between Civil Society, State and Market," *Asian Journal of Communication* 19, no. 1 (2009): 39–58.

SCTV was part owned by Sudwikatmono (about 20 percent), Suharto's daughter Siti Hardiyanti owned TPI, and Suharto cronies Aburizal Bakrie (Bakrie Group) and Liem Sioe Liong (Salim Group) owned ANTEVE and Indosiar respectively.

Initially, private broadcasters were expected to follow the nation-building model of broadcasting that had governed the operations of TVRI. Private broadcasters were not allowed to broadcast their own news bulletins and instead had to relay TVRI's news bulletins.[21] Otherwise, stations had no other restrictions on content, and sourced much of their programming from overseas due to cheaper costs. Television stations turned to Sindhi importers to supply this content because of the expertise they had developed in importing film.[22] Driven by the need to sell audiences to advertisers, private broadcasters became more attentive to the interests and needs of their audience. In part, this saw the rise of audience ratings supplied by SRI (Survey Research Indonesia, later AC Nielson) to track audience consumption patterns.[23] Commercial television had a lot to do with the shifting understanding of audiences and their interests, and by introducing market mechanisms to entertainment. When new regulations were introduced in the early 1990s requiring stations to broadcast at least 70 percent local content, the Sindhi companies became the primary suppliers of entertainment content.[24]

What gave Sindhis an added advantage in the television content business was their ability to access advance capital to fund production and source human resources.[25] Advance capital was necessary because television stations could take up to six months to pay content suppliers. Many Indonesian filmmakers who were also vying for broadcast slots at the time did not have access to money because banks and other institutions were reluctant to lend money to make content. Sindhis, by contrast, had significant financial networks both domestically and overseas that could be tapped for money. As Maria Myutel notes, much of this was based around the networks of trust that Sindhi business networks provided.[26] Secondly, Sindhi film producers were able to bring in trained television writers, directors, and technicians from India to build up the human resources of their companies to meet the significant demand coming from the television stations.[27] They were necessary since much of the existing talent in the film and television industries were not able to adapt quickly enough to the new demands of serialized television that included rapid production and cliff-hanger plots.

Most significant in this era was Raam Punjabi, who established a new company called Multivision Plus (MVP) in 1990 to supply content for the new commercial television stations. With two decades of experience producing films and an

21. Kitley, *Television, Nation, and Culture*, 181.
22. Myutel, "Indians and National Television," 104.
23. Barkin, "Producing Indonesia."
24. Myutel, "Indians and National Television."
25. Myutel, "Indians and National Television."
26. Myutel, "Indians and National Television," 107.
27. Myutel, "Indians and National Television," 111.

awareness of global television trends, Punjabi was well-placed to produce content that was a mix of local content with foreign format. MVP would offer television stations a full package that included TV serial, stars and an attached sponsor.[28] His brother Dhamoo Punjabi ran the advertising arm of the company and used those connections to bring advertisers on board. As a result, Multivision Plus company became synonymous with the highly popular *sinetron* genre and Raam Punjabi became known as *raja sinetron* or "king of soap opera." By 2001, Multivision Plus had produced over 9,000 hours of *sinetron*, including *Gara-Gara* (*Just Because of*, 1992–1997) that played for five years on RCTI. In January 2001, Raam Punjabi had twelve titles broadcast across five television stations. Between 1998 and 2002, Barkin estimates that 20 percent of locally produced entertainment content was from Multivision Plus.[29] In 2013, according to *Forbes* magazine, Raam Punjabi had an estimated personal wealth of over USD 100 million.

Multivision's practices set the standards for many in the content industry, and many other Sindhi producers followed suit. Soraya Intercine had made content for TVRI since 1982, but switched to supplying private television from 1990 onwards. Rapi Films moved into *sinetron* production in 1993.[30] Through the 1990s, and especially through the tumultuous years of 1998 and *reformasi*, this provided producers with a stable and secure source of income. Television remained the entertainment of choice for Indonesians, even as they abandoned the cinema since watching television was effectively free. Production companies were able to integrate themselves into the working culture of the television stations and situate themselves as trusted and preferred suppliers of television content. Most important of these was the *sinetron* genre which became staple mainstream and primetime programming across all television stations. It required the Sindhi producers to modernize and professionalize their production companies in order to meet the demand from television stations. The size and scale of their operations thus became unmatched across the film or television industries.

Structural Advantage

In the period since 1998, the old companies have continued producing content for television, but have been attracted back to film in part because of increased competition, and delays in payment from television stations.[31] Although they struggled to return to film until they began working with new generation filmmakers, they are large enterprises with significant networks and a track record unmatched by any of the new companies. While there is increased competition with the emergence

28. Myutel, "Indians and National Television," 112; Barkin, "Producing Indonesia."
29. Barkin, "Producing Indonesia."
30. Myutel, "Indians and National Television," 100.
31. Garin Nugroho and Dyna Herlina S, *Krisis dan Paradoks Film Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kompas Penerbit Buku, 2015).

of a range of new production companies, the old production companies have an advantage and can leverage on their business networks, connections with Harris Lasmana as head of the Cinema 21 Group, and their substantial financial power. As a result, when they began producing films again, they drew on these resources to reduce the risk of failure and maximize the possibilities of success. This allowed them to consolidate their position within the film industry, even though they were comparatively late entrants. Over the past decade, they have become the dominant producers of cinema content, and form an oligopoly with two new companies, Sinemart and MD Pictures.

The break-up of Sudwikatmono's business interests following the Asian financial crisis, and the liberalization of the post–New Order media industry, birthed two other significant producers in the post-1998 industry. Leo Sutanto, who established the production company Sinemart in 2003, had joined Suptan in 1972 first as a subtitler of Mandarin films before becoming general manager of 21 Group cinemas. Between 1997 and 1999, he worked as a producer in Indika Entertainment, but left in 1999 and formed a new production company Prima Entertainment with SCTV's former financial director Gunawan Sulaiman, who resigned after the station's coverage of protests in Semanggi in November 1998 was criticized by Habibie's government. Sulaiman and Sutanto parted ways three years later, and Leo Sutanto formed his own production company, Sinemart. Sutanto was succeeded as producer in Indika by Shanker RS, who had worked in Parkit Films (1988–1990), was managing director of Multivision Plus (1990–1994), and at Kharisma Starvision (1995–2004). At Indika, Shanker drove film production, producing over a dozen films and television content until his departure in 2009. Since then, Shanker produces mostly for his new company Digital Film Maker but has collaborated with Sentra Films, a spinoff from Multivision Plus.

More than forty years after they entered the film business, many of the original Sindhi producers are handing over the operation of their companies to their children. Rapi Films remained under the direction of brothers Gope and Subagio until Subagio's death in 2011, but much of the operational work in the company is now conducted by Gope's son Sunil Samtani. By 2013, Rapi Films had produced over 6,000 hours of sinetron and 150 feature films.[32] Raam Soraya remains in charge of Soraya Intercine, but his sons Rocky Soraya (producer and director) and Sunil Soraya (currently vice president) play an increasingly important role in the company and will soon lead. Following the phenomenal success of *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love*, Soraya Intercine has produced big-budget commercial films including *5cm* (Rizal Mantovani, 2012) and *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* (*The Sinking of the Van Der Wijck*, Sunil Soraya, 2013). Soraya Intercine established the subsidiary Hitmaker Studios in 2012, working closely with Jose Poernomo for many of its releases. Soraya Intercine claims to be the "biggest film production company

32. Pallavi Aiyar, "Sindhi kings of Indonesian entertainment," *The Hindu*, August 24, 2013. http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/sindhi-kings-of-indonesian-entertainment/article5052949.ece.

in Indonesia" having produced hundreds of titles since 1982.[33] Rocky Soraya has also directed films, including *Chika* (2008), *Sunshine Becomes You* (2015), and the horror film *The Doll* (2016). Soraya Intercine has also produced over forty-five titles for television since 1982.

The most significant generational transition happened at Multivision Plus in 2002 when Dhamoo Punjabi left the company with his son Manoj Punjabi, who had worked at Multivision Plus since 1995, to form a new company now known as MD Corp. Beginning with interests in music (MD Music) and television (MD Entertainment), MD Corp has since expanded rapidly as a content provider for television, overtaking the once dominant Multivision. In a 2015 interview, Manoj Punjabi claims that between 30 and 40 percent of all primetime television content is produced by MD Entertainment.[34] Much of this is broadcast exclusively on MNCTV after MD Entertainment acquired a 25 percent stake in MNCTV in August 2011 making it the sole suppliers of soap opera content to the station. In 2013, their *sinetron Cinta Fitri* (Fitri's Love) became one of Indonesia's longest running with over 1,000 episodes. MD Pictures produced its first feature film *Kala* (*Dead Time*, Joko Anwar) in 2007, and has produced others under subsidiaries Mitra Pictures and BIC Productions, which now account for about 40 percent of the company's income. In 2015, the company established an animation company called MD Animation with serials such as *Adit Sopo Jarwo* (2014–) dan *Tendangan Halilintar* (2014–).

Rivalry between MD and MVP is visible in Jakarta's high-rise landscape as both companies have built new office towers opposite each other along Rasuna Sahid Road in Jakarta. As Multivision Plus has lost its market share to MD, Raam Punjabi has expanded his businesses into exhibition both domestically and internationally. In 2002, he opened a cinema with businessman Abdul Latief called the MPX Grande Boutique Cinema in Blok M Jakarta,[35] which caters to the local Indian community. Since 2012, Punjabi has begun investing again in cinemas, opening a new chain in second-tier cities called Platinum Cineplex. Platinum Cineplex has also expanded overseas into markets in East Timor, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Competition between MVP and MD may be intense, but the overall effect is a consolidation of a small oligopoly that works to exclude other players from the lucrative content creation industry.

Old names in the film industry remain connected to each other in important ways. The PPFI (Association of Indonesian Film Producers) is one of the forums where old film industry interests still wield considerable influence over the institutional arrangement of the film industry. Djamaluddin Malik had established the

33. Original reads "adalah perusahaan film terbesar di Indonesia." See "About Us," http://www.sorayaintercine-films.com

34. "Manoj Punjabi: champion of Indonesian movies," *Financial Times*, October 13, 2015. https://www.ft.com/content/b018a012-6150-11e5-a28b-50226830d644.

35. Abdul Latief is a well-known businessman who owns the television station Lativi and Pasaraya Department stores amongst other business interests. He was minister for labour from 1993 to 1998 under President Suharto.

PPFI in 1954 to strengthen the bargaining position of producers vis-à-vis the state, and during the New Order it became one of the industry organizations through which the state could exercise authority over the industry. In 2008, the PPFI was headed by Raam Punjabi, and includes five of the big producers in the oligopoly.[36] Notably, independent producers such as Mira Lesmana, Shanty Harmayn, and other new companies such as Maxima Pictures are not members of the PPFI.[37] For them, the PPFI is an irrelevant institution that does not represent their interests as young producers.[38] Nevertheless, the PPFI remains the peak body representing producers and film companies, and is recognized by the government. They are, for example, in charge of selecting Indonesia's submission to the Oscars as well as sending delegations to international film markets.[39]

These close relationships are replicated in the organizational structure of the local committee for the Asia Pacific Film Festival that was to be held in Indonesia in 2008, although it was cancelled due to the monetary crisis. Established by Japan in 1954, the festival travels each year to a different Asian country. In Indonesia, Raam Punjabi is the central driver of the festival, and when I met him in 2008, he spoke enthusiastically about the festival and how it is held to promote Asian films between Asian countries.[40] It is also an arena in which the relationships between government agencies (specifically the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Jakarta City Government) are forged with this group of producers. Members of the organizing committee for the festival include Gope Samtani as the Organizing Committee Chairman, Chand Parwez Servia as the Second Secretary, Harris Lasmana as Head Treasurer assisted by Harry Simon (former cameraman, now producer with Virgo Putra Film) and Jimmy Herianto (21 Cinema Group director).[41] Other members include Hatoek Subroto and Raam Punjabi's wife Raakhee Punjabi. Younger filmmakers like Mira Lesmana criticize the festival as a parade of actors and actresses rather than a serious forum for promoting Asian films.[42] For these local producers, however, it is another forum in which they work together and in cooperation with the government.

Although their power and presence has diminished, there remains an outer circle of old film industry figures who have legacy relationships with the oligopoly and to the 21 Group. After success in distribution and producing, Hatoek Subroto moved into equipment rental and film processing in 1990 with his company Elang Perkasa Film. Although the Asian financial crisis almost bankrupted him, he

36. See Tjasmadi, *100 Tahun Sejarah Bioskop*, 165. See also, PPFI, "Pengurus & Sekretariat," http://ppfindonesia.blogspot.com/p/sekretariat.html.
37. See, for example, the interview with Nan Achnas where she discusses some difficulties of not being a member of PPFI. "Nurman Hakim and Nan Achnas: Fighting against censorship," *The Jakarta Post*, May 12, 2009.
38. See, for example, "KONGRES PPFI Adisoerya Abdy Dicalonkan Lagi Raam Punjabi Menolak," *Disc Tarra*, July 16, 2001.
39. Silvia Wong, "Indonesia Submits Love for Share as Oscar Entry," *Screen*, October 3, 2006.
40. Personal interview, Raam Punjabi, August 17, 2008.
41. Listed on the festival website "Festival Committee." http://www.52apff.com/festival-commitee/.
42. Personal interview, January 30, 2009.

survived such that he was able to fund the films of Handi Muljono (PT Diwangkara Citra Swara Film) and Madhu Mahtani (PT Andalas Kencana Film).[43] Tien Ali of PT Cancer Mas produced films in the 1980s and 1990s but has not produced since 1999's *Kisah Veronika* (*Veronica's Story*, Henry Farel L Tobing) but continues to own cinemas and distribute films in Jakarta. Alexander Tedja, owns a number of cinemas in Sumatra and Bangka, the film import company PT Pan Asiatic Film, as well as the Blok M Mall in South Jakarta which houses a 21 Group cinema. Tedja owns the Pakuwon Group with his wife Melinda Tedja with investments in shopping malls, hotels and property and are together worth about USD 840 million according to *GlobeAsia*.[44] Johnny Pondanga, who owns 21 Group cinemas in South Jakarta (via Lia Indah Swastika Film), is also a member of the GPBSI. Pondanga produced erotic titles in the 1990s, and recently co-produced *Rasa* (*Feeling*, Charles Gozali, 2009). As an example of their cross-connections, MD Pictures employs Karan Mahtani, son of Madhu Mahtani, as a co-producer and the MD Pictures subsidiary Mitra Pictures has employed both Firman Bintang, producer with Kanta Indah Film, and Madhu Mahtani as producers for their films.

There is fierce competition, but this enables members of the oligopoly to consolidate their position making it difficult for other entrants to challenge their dominance. With deep histories and large networks, they retain an ability to leverage on other assets within the industry. Importantly this gives them access to information and knowledge about the industry and the market, which is often unavailable to new companies. Chand Parwez Servia and Raam Punjabi, who both own cinemas, have access to exclusive audience data which they can use to better understand the market to their own advantage. Wealth and success in the film industry are not just the products of better marketing or even a better product. Rather, certain production companies gain significant advantage through the structural position that they occupy, especially the networks of influence and the capital they can generate.

Screening *Lebaran*

Gaining a screening slot in the cinema is a relatively straightforward procedure in Indonesia and involves booking a date by providing details of the film to be screened to the cinema company. Since the Cinema 21 Group retains a dominant position in the film industry, gaining a screening slot in a 21 Group cinema is necessary to reaching a wide an audience as possible in order to secure the possibly of ensuring a film's commercial success. In this process, many smaller filmmakers made it known that this was not an equal process and that many of the larger production companies had privileged access to 21 Group cinemas and their screening schedule. Some

43. *Roh* (*The Evil Spirit*, Ben Hernandez, 2007) and *Rien Pembunuh Berantai* (*Rien The Wild Murderer*, Steady Rimba, 2008).

44. "150 Richest Indonesians," *GlobeAsia*, June 2016. http://www.globeasia.com/globeasia-lists/150-richest-indonesians/.

reported that they could only book a date after their film was completed, whereas the large production companies are able to book release dates without a film even made. If necessary, they could change the title they wanted to without losing the screening slot. By contrast, some smaller producers reported waiting for up to a year before they could screen their films.

What is less discussed, but which reveals the ways in which producers gain market advantage, are the allocations of the coveted Lebaran screening dates. Lebaran (or *Idul Fitri*) is the traditional "high-season" for local films at the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan when families who have returned home go out together once they have fulfilled their religious and familial obligations. Part of the box-office success of *Eiffel . . . I'm in Love* could be attributed to the fact that it was released four days before *Idul Fitri* in 2003 and gained sizeable numbers from the holiday period. Releasing for Lebaran is one way of mitigating some of the risk associated with cinema release. Consistently since at least 2008, these slots have been preferentially given to the old production companies.

Patterns of preference were evident in the screening schedule for *Lebaran* in 2008 when four of the five films released in 21 Group cinemas were from the old production companies. Soraya Intercine released *Chika* (Rocky Soraya, 2008), Starvision released *Barb13* (*Barbie 13*, Monty Tiwa, 2008), MD Pictures released *Cinlok* (*Love on Location*, Guntur Soeharjanto, 2008), and MVP Pictures released *Suami-Suami Takut Isteri* (*Husbands Afraid of their Wives*, Sofyan D Surza, 2008). The fifth film, and the one that would go on to set new audience records, was *Laskar Pelangi* (*Rainbow Troops*, Riri Riza, 2008) from Miles Films, based on the best-selling novel by Andrea Hirata. *Kantata Takwa* (*Song of Devotion*, Gotot Prakosa, Eros Djarot, 2008) was released in Lebaran but it only aired in the few cinemas owned by the new Blitz Megaplex company. This film was made during the New Order, abandoned, and only completed in 2008 and featured critics of the New Order regime including filmmaker Eros Djarot, musician Iwan Fals, and poet WS Rendra.[45] Clearly the 21 Group could not totally exclude other producers from the Lebaran schedule, especially producers such as Miles Films who had a hit on their hands.

There is a consistent pattern in the screening schedules for Lebaran. The seven large producers will invariably gain a majority of the Lebaran screening slots. It is an advantage they enjoy over other producers in the industry. In gaining this screening slot, producers enjoy additional audiences and income, even if the film is not well-made. As much as *reformasi* opened up the film industry to new entrants, they would be structurally disadvantaged compared to the seven old producers. In a multitude of ways, these seven large producers have been able to consolidate their position in the film industry as the dominant producers of content. With a broad range of business connections and interests that include feature film, cinemas,

45. Katinka van Heeren, "Reverberations of Kantata Takwa," *Asian Cinema* 21, no. 2 (2010): 92–113.

television they have emerged as the seven leading content producers in Indonesia. In this way, the Indonesian production landscape increasingly mirrors industries in other developed countries, where a few large firms dominate the industry, operating as the primary conduits of pop culture's standardization, integration across multiple platforms, and industrialization of its production.

As an oligopoly, these large companies provide the commercial backbone for the contemporary film industry, with significant capital, experience and networks providing the stability to film production in order to sustain it as an ongoing concern. It has enabled many filmmakers to make their movies and access the market knowledge and connections of these companies when they work with them. In turn, this has allowed these companies to increasingly consolidate their positions as the industry's dominant players, despite being peripheral to the reformation of film production in the early 2000s (as outlined in Chapter 2). No new players have the capital to challenge the institutional and financial dominance of these seven companies; some such as Miles Films, Legacy Pictures (Robert Ronny), and Falcon Pictures (HB Naveen) have been successful with making hit films, but they lack the size and power to challenge the oligopoly. When young filmmakers entered and revitalized the film industry in the 2000s, they were not only navigating an industry with established, dominant legacy players, but as the next chapter will show, they also had to deal with the state, censorship, and entrenched regulations, much of it also an inheritance of the New Order.

7

Friction: Society, Censorship, and Government Policy

As much as filmmakers want a direct relationship with their audiences, there are numerous variables between them. Some of these are specific to feature films, like distributors and cinemas, but some can also be specific to the national and regional contexts and to a historical period in question. During the New Order, the state was the primary intervening variable that regulated and controlled film production from inception to release. After 1998, however, as the state went into retreat and lost much of its authority, filmmakers were able to work with minimal state interference. Indie and alternative screening circuits developed including campus screenings, film festivals, and private screenings which often put audiences directly in touch with filmmakers. *Reformasi* was in part characterized by a plethora of new publications, broadcasters, and voices across the media and cultural industries as content producers and publishers were liberated from state control.

As the film industry stabilized by 2003, production and exhibition became more regularized and standardized as more Indonesian films were released in cinemas. Young filmmakers moving into feature film production wanted to screen their films legally and commercially to wide audiences. Wanting to go mainstream in some ways simplified the process of distribution and exhibition, but increased the risks, public visibility, and formal processes associated with making and releasing a film. Although they could deal directly with Cinema 21, the number of stakeholders invariably increased, as did the risks (investment, time, et cetera), and the need to deal with censorship regulations. Becoming mainstream does not only open new commercial and financial opportunities, it also makes filmmaking more political as the film industry encounters a complex of opinions, state regulation, interest groups, and the wider public.

Most media practitioners—including filmmakers—benefitted from the effect *reformasi* had on their practice. Journalists were also more proactive in altering the regulatory landscape in their favor, campaigning heavily for legislative change and rewarded with the new 1999 Press Law which removed the arbitrary powers of the minister and gave greater protection and freedom to news outlets. Journalists have a long history of activism in Indonesia, commitment to reporting on events of public importance, and shaping public discourse. Even under New Order restraints, the

press was constantly pushing the limits of what was permissible. By contrast, filmmakers often had an inflated idea of what they could achieve through their work especially advocates of *film nasional* who thought film could educate audiences and "show them the truth of their lives." Tellingly, Eros Djarot who straddled both film and journalism, achieved greater critical impact as a journalist rather than a filmmaker. Although he participated in filmmaker protests in 1991 and included a veiled critique of the New Order in his 1988 film *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, he had a greater impact setting up news tabloid *Detik* in 1994, which was subsequently banned, and helped to establish the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) and the NGO Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW).

Compared to journalists, filmmakers were far less active in campaigning for institutional reform and were instead more focused on overcoming the practical problems they faced making films. For the *Kuldesak* filmmakers, for example, the goal was not to topple the New Order, but to produce their work in a way they wanted:

> Our enthusiasm is more because we were angry because we cannot make films. We've studied, and this is what we want, and why are there so many bureaucracies, of course there was rebellion towards the government as well. With the Department of Information, we're so upset with them. What is this Department of Information, 'you cannot do this, you cannot do that' but not per se about bringing down the regime. But dissatisfaction towards the regime of course, it's all in us.[1]

In its content *Kuldesak* is a clear indictment of life under the New Order, but the filmmakers' main concern was how to work around the state regulations rather than fight to abolish them. When President Abdurrahman Wahid abolished the Department of Information in 1999 and shifted film to the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, filmmaker Tino Saroengallo says it was "more a reaction to the euphoria of *reformasi*"[2] than a result of specific pressure from filmmakers. Filmmakers themselves had very little to do with the decision and remained peripheral in the push for institutional reform. Legal reform was discussed and advocated in the years following Suharto's resignation but failed to gain traction with lawmakers or the general public.[3]

For over a decade after 1998, filmmaking in Indonesia was still governed by the 1992 Film Law No. 8. Legislated at the height of the New Order to replace the

1. Mira Lesmana, personal interview, January 30, 2009. "Our semangat itu lebih karena we were angry because we cannot make films. We've studied, and this is what we want, and why are there so many bureaucracies, of course ada pemberontakan terhadap pemerintah juga. Dengan Departeman Penerangan, we're so upset with them. What is this Departeman Penerangan, 'you cannot do this, you cannot do that' but not per se about bringing down the regime. Tapi ketidakpuasan terhadap regime of course, it's all in us."
2. Original reads: "lebih merupakan reaksi terhadap euphoria reformasi." Tino Saroengallo, "Lika-Liku Teori Perizinan Produksi Film," *Behind the Screen* 2, no. 8 (June 2006): 54–56.
3. See, for example, the detailed legal study and argument put forward by the Indonesia Media Law & Policy Centre. Hinca IP Pandjaitan and Dyah Aryani P, *Melepas Pasung Kebijakan Perfilman di Indonesia: Catatan untuk Undang-Undang Perfilman Baru* (Jakarta: Warta Global Indonesia, 2001).

1964 film law, it reinforced many of the restrictive film policies already in place, defining the need to control film production and seeing film as a potential source of politically provocative and dangerous information. Krishna Sen describes the law as being written by "a state that sees itself as threatened by the cultural work of its own citizens."[4] Substantively the law sought to regulate all aspects of filmmaking, distribution and exhibition and makes particular reference to film's didactic function and as a tool to enhance social cohesion and national unity.[5] It reiterates the boundaries and rhetoric of New Order ideology emphasizing concepts such as "order," "harmony," and "stability."

The 1992 film law was only efficacious in the context of the New Order, with its complex of institutions and agencies. Even with the transfer of regulatory authority to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1999 (meaning that film was no longer to be treated as a mode of propaganda but as a cultural resource), there was no effort to renew film regulations or to enforce the 1992 law. The nascent film industry was disorganized and largely unaffected by the law anyway, as young filmmakers were more concerned with making films than fighting for legal change. Of greater importance to filmmakers was the Film Censorship Board (LSF, Lembaga Sensor Film), which not only remained potent in its role as censor, but also directly limited their ability to make and screen the types of films they wanted to make.

Redefining the Role of Censorship

Any film, television show, or advertisement in Indonesia that is to be released in the cinema, on television, or on VCD/DVD requires a certificate of approval from the LSF. Even though the film industry contracted during the 1990s, the LSF expanded because of the booming television industry. With the abolition of the Department of Information in 1999, the LSF became a semi-autonomous institution, reporting directly to the Minister of Culture and Tourism. In 2011, responsibilities for culture were shifted to the Ministry of Education and Culture which now oversees the operations of the LSF.[6] Its forty-six members, composing Commissions A and B, are drawn from government departments, the five sanctioned religions, the security apparatus (police, military), and include "experts" in journalism, psychology, and culture.[7] Long serving member Titie Said was elected head in 2003 and served until 2009.[8] The current head is Major General Ahmad Yani Basuki (2015–2019),

4. Krishna Sen, "Cinema Polic(ing)y in Indonesia," in *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Albert Moran (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 183.
5. Sen and Hill, *Media, Culture, and Politics*.
6. From 2004 to 2011 the Minister for Tourism and Culture was Jero Wacik.
7. For a full list of the members for the period 2005–2008, see Tjasmadi, *100 Tahun Sejarah Bioskop*, 238. See also http://www.lsf.go.id/profil.
8. Titie Said Sadikun is an author of twenty-five novels and former journalist who became involved in film after a number of her stories were adapted in the 1970s. In the 1980s she acted on juries for various film festivals, and is also regarded as a member of the Angkatan '66 (Generation of 1966) artists who survived the purge of 1965–1966.

a former staffer to president Yudhoyono and former head of the Public Relations division of the army. Due to the composition of its commissions the LSF continues to perpetuate a similar social and political conservatism as it did under the New Order, acting as a normalizing institution who see it as their mission to ensure order and stability by cutting content deemed harmful, immoral or divisive.

Of all the institutions that have regulated filmmaking in Indonesia, censorship has been one of the most consistent and continuous. The modern LSF grew out of the Dutch Ordonnantie Bioscoop (Cinema Ordinance) introduced in 1916 which was designed to prevent the native audience from witnessing the immoral activities of Caucasians on screen for fear that it would lower their moral standing in the eyes of their colonial subjects.[9] Later, during the Japanese occupation between 1942 and 1945, film was deployed as propaganda designed to inculcate sympathy and compliance to Japanese rule and promote the idea of the East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. This propagandist function considered it necessary for film to be informative, educational, and to promote social order. These functions carried into the newly established Department of Information of the Republican government, whose officials had worked for the Japanese and who deemed it essential that the media support and promote nation building. They were incorporated into the Department of Information of independent Indonesia in the 1950s, which then intensified during the New Order under its developmentalist agenda.[10] What sustained this strong commitment to censorship and the LSF was the belief that film is inherently potent (more so than any other medium), both in terms of its ability to educate and inculcate and conversely its potential to cause disorder and promote sedition.[11]

Following the abolition of the Department of Information in 1999, the LSF initiated its own internal review, in part proposing to shift from simple "cutting" censorship to a graduated classification system on a par with countries such as Singapore or Australia.[12] This review stalled and the LSF continued as it had before, no doubt in response to the proliferation of media production after 1998. Only a year before the end of the New Order, the BP2N (National Film Planning Agency, Badan Pertimbangan Perfilman Nasional) commissioned a study that recommended strengthening the censorship regime because of a perceived rise in the immoral content of films.[13] Censoring imagines the audience as a largely undifferentiated mass, so the role of arbiter falls to the state and not the individual. When I interviewed LSF head Titie Said in 2008, she said she believed that the "cutting"

9. Veronica Kusuma and Ignatius Haryanto, "Sensor Film di Indonesia," in *Ketika Sensor Tak Mati-Mati*, ed. Ignatius Haryanto (Jakarta: Yayasan Kalam, 2007), 107; Tjasmadi, *100 Tahun Sejarah Bioskop*.
10. Sen, *Indonesian Cinema*.
11. Kurniawan Adi Saputro, "Melihat Ingatan Buatan: Menonton Penonton Film Indonesia 1900–1964," in *Penghibur(an): Masa Lalu dan Budaya Masa Kini Indonesia*, ed. by Budi Susanto (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005).
12. Titie Said, personal interview, May 28, 2008.
13. Sarief M. Arief, Manimbang Kahariady and Yayan Hadiyat, *Permasalahan Sensor dan Pertanggungjawaban Etika Produksi* (Jakarta: Badan Pertimbangan Perfilman Nasional, 1997).

kind of censorship was no longer appropriate given the social changes of the past decade.[14] Despite this, the internal discussions of the LSF were not made public and the LSF continued to cut as before, and has seen itself as increasingly necessary as the media landscape changes with digital technology.

Reformasi issued fewer challenges to the LSF than expected because films with potentially controversial content usually avoided formal distribution channels preferring instead to screen informally or privately outside the scope of the LSF.[15] One of the few films to encounter the LSF in this period was *The Army Forced them to be Violent* (Tino Saroengallo, 1999) a documentary about the student protests that forced the resignation of President Suharto. Although many films were made about the protests at the end of the New Order, Saroengallo wanted to release his film in the cinemas and on VCD. After submitting the film to the LSF as required, fourteen seconds of footage were cut, and the title was changed to the more anodyne *The Student Movement in Indonesia*. In justifying their decision to change the title and cut footage of Armed Forces personnel hitting demonstrators, the LSF in part argued:

> If it is his intention to make a documentary film, then the central principle that has to be observed is to cover both sides equally. By using the aforementioned title, does that not mean that a priori 'the Army' is isolated as the only cause of students turning violent?[16]

Saroengallo found that his creative rights as a documentary filmmaker were trumped by the LSF asserting a principle of neutrality because the film was critical of a state agency. This was despite the fact that the same footage had been widely aired on television at the time. Saroengallo argued that removing the footage also served to erase history, to which the LSF replied: "Will history be erased with the removal of scenes only 14 seconds long?"[17] Saroengallo was forced to accept the changes, and *The Student Movement in Indonesia* was released. The case passed with little notice from filmmakers, but its implications would continue to be felt since the LSF had successfully asserted its ability to censor political content it deemed critical of state agencies.

Over the next five years, a number of other films underwent official censorship but nothing as significant and telling as the case of *Buruan Cium Gue* (*Kiss Me Quick*, Findo Purwono HW, 2004), a mainstream commercial production. *Buruan*

14. Personal interview, May 28, 2008.
15. These were mostly documentaries and short films, although some features were screened including films by Aria Kusumadewa (*Beth* and *Novel Tanpa Huruf 'R'*) and Rudi Soedjarwo (*Tragedi* and *Bintang Jatuh*). See Prakosa, *Film Pendek Independen*.
16. "Kalau niatnya untuk membuat film dokumenter maka prinsip yang pertama-tama harus dipegang adalah to cover both sides equally. Dengan mengambil judul tersebut, apakah bukan berarti sudah secara a priori menyudutkan 'the Army' sebagai satu-satunya penyebab mahasiswa bertindak keras/brutal?" "Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film Bag.4," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.
17. "Apakah sejarah akan dapat ditutupi dengan penghapusan adegan yang hanya 14 detik?" "Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film Bag.4," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.

Cium Gue was made to conclude the long running and highly popular TV series *Anak Baru Gede* (*Growing Up*) from production house Multivision Plus (MVP). *Buruan Cium Gue* was to mark Raam Punjabi's return to feature film production. The appeal of the film not only rested on the TV show's popularity, but on the promise of showing the lead couple's first kiss, which could not be shown on television.[18] After passing censorship with the kiss intact, the film was released in the cinemas, but soon faced protest from Islamic tele-preacher Aa Gym who claimed that the film's title alone encouraged promiscuity.[19] After much back and forth between the LSF, producer Raam Punjabi, and Aa Gym, minister Jero Wacik ordered the film withdrawn from circulation. The film had already screened for sixteen days and although it was already drawing large audiences because of the popularity of the TV series, it attracted an even larger audience because of the controversy. Within a week of the ban, pirate copies were available and selling fast.[20] The film was re-edited and released six months later under the less-appealing title of *Satu Kecupan* (*One Kiss*).[21]

The case of *Buruan Cium Gue* revealed complications in the new cultural terrain after *reformasi*. Kissing scenes between two main characters had been passed by the LSF previously in films such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta?* (*What's Up With Love?*, Rudi Soedjarwo, 2002) and two men kissing in *Arisan!* (*The Gathering*, Nia Dinata, 2003). *Buruan Cium Gue* however was the victim of a celebrity preacher trying to bolster his moral credentials by protesting immorality in pop culture,[22] even though it was common knowledge that Aa Gym had not seen the film. Raam Punjabi had a commercial interest in seeing the film succeed, but he was an easy target because of his minority ethnicity and the general low-standing of commercial film producers. The LSF initially tried to justify their decision to Aa Gym, but capitulated to his demands when it realized that its legitimacy would be bolstered by taking a more conservative line. The losers were filmmakers themselves. A short-lived group calling themselves *Eksponen Pendukung Kebebasan Berekspresi* (Exponents Supporting Freedom of Expression) expressed disappointment at the LSF, the minister, and Punjabi for having given in so easily.[23] However, it was becoming increasingly clear that as films gained visibility and became more mainstream, filmmakers would struggle to translate that market popularity into political support. The case of *Buruan Cium Gue* demonstrated the relative power dynamic between filmmakers, the LSF, and civil society. Filmmakers who had benefitted from a comparatively liberal period after the end of the New Order had encountered the first real blowback from society and found that their rights to creative expression were far from guaranteed. Instead,

18. Ve Handojo, personal interview, November 20, 2008.
19. For a detailed account, see van Heeren, *Contemporary Indonesian Film*, 113–19.
20. Arif Ardiansyah, "VCD Bajakan Film Buruan Cium Gue Laku Keras," *Tempo Interaktif*, August 23, 2004.
21. The original title makes use of more informal language, whereas the new title uses a more literary word (*kecupan*) for kiss.
22. Scriptwriter Ve Handojo believes Aa Gym "needs the controversy for his image." Personal interview, November 20, 2008.
23. Andreas Harsono, "Protes Terhadap Pelarangan Film Buruan Cium Gue." *Andreas Harsono*, 2004. http://andreasharsono.blogspot.com/2004/08/protes-terhadap-pelarangan-film-buruan.html.

they would increasingly encounter emboldened figures from civil society and an LSF rediscovering its legitimacy as a defender of morality and conservativism.

Responding to Censorship

Filmmakers were not silent in the face of censorship and many increasingly became worried about the growing power of moral guardians such as Aa Gym and the willingness of the LSF to accommodate them. It began to create a climate of uncertainty for filmmakers as they could no longer rely on the LSF to uphold and defend their own decisions. Director Ody Harahap criticizes the inconstancy of the LSF: "After they make a decision, they are not even sure about their own decisions."[24] Even for the commercially minded producer Sunil Samtani of Rapi Films, the situation is frustrating:

> The problem is, the censors view it, 'Ok this is fine. We have cut some and it's fine to proceed with the movie. Show it.' But then there are some extreme religious fanatics that are like 'this is not allowed.' Who do you put the fault at? Do you put the fault at that [the fanatics] or do you put fault at the censors?[25]

In this climate of uncertainty created by the seemingly arbitrary and inconsistent behavior of the LSF, producers like Sunil Samtani (who produces over half a dozen films a year) feel that their hands are tied, and they tend to play it as safe as possible. If controversy erupts, they have little option but to capitulate to protests from conservative individuals and groups. Filmmakers are relatively weak and have little recourse for appeal, and they cannot negotiate in good faith with such groups.

Of course, there are always alternative paths for filmmakers to release films without attracting the attention of either the LSF or moral guardians. Harry Suharyadi's first film *Pachinko and Everybody's Happy* (2000) premiered at Jiffest (Jakarta International Film Festival) in 2000, and although it was censored by the LSF, Suharyadi locked himself in the projection room and screened the original uncut version instead. As noted in Chapter 2, Edwin made the controversial *Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly* (2008) in which he dramatizes what it means to be Chinese in Indonesia. The film includes a scene of forced sodomy on a Chinese dentist by two other characters, metaphors of the military and big business respectively. Edwin sees this scene as integral to the film, and when the 2009 Singapore International Film Festival was to screen the film with this scene censored, Edwin withdrew the film to maintain the work's integrity. The film was submitted to the LSF for screening in Indonesia but was also cut substantially; it became the subject of the documentary film *Cuts* (Chairun Nissa, 2016). Numerous informal screenings have been held in Indonesia and Singapore by utilizing informal networks and private venues, thereby

24. "Tapi sesudah mereka ngasih keputusan kok mereka tidak yakin dengan keputusan mereka sendiri." Personal interview, Ody Harahap, October 20, 2008.
25. Personal interview, Sunil Samtani, October 19, 2009.

avoiding the state and censorship. Whilst this method has been beneficial to Edwin whose films have been screened at film festivals around the world, this limits the audience and exposure of the work. Most Indonesian filmmakers want to release their films locally in cinemas for greater audiences and income.

Yet the ability to even make films became a concern when the production of *Lastri* was abandoned in late 2008 because of protests by a group of residents, provoked by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam). After a decade long hiatus, Eros Djarot decided to return to filmmaking with a love story based on the 2007 novel *Suara Perempuan Korban Tragedi 65* (*The Voice of a Woman Victim of the 1965 Tragedy*) by Ita F Nadia. At the *selamatan* marking the beginning of production Djarot acknowledged the potential risk making a film set in 1965 but was nevertheless optimistic.[26] However, within a couple of weeks, Djarot had abandoned production due to protests from residents in Solo where filming was taking place. Despite having permission from both the Central Intelligence and Security Agency and the National Police Headquarters, local police ordered filming to stop, agreeing with residents who claimed that the film promoted communism. Djarot was forced to abandon the project, and in a subsequent media interview likened the situation to being under the New Order again.[27]

Lastri was an important lesson for writers and filmmakers who wanted to explore contentious or controversial issues in their films. Such issues include the events of 1965, the eradication of the PKI, and the history of communism more generally. Respected scriptwriter Jujur Prananto sees the case of *Lastri* setting the limits of what is acceptable to film:

> I have a feeling that freedom of expression is only for the elite, the thinkers, [and] intellectuals. [They] can appreciate [or] can accept the fact that those who were detained as PKI were not necessarily guilty. History was engineered, and those who know that are only from that strata of people. It may be true, but only a few know, but for others, the rest [of the people] believe that it was the communists. [For them] Communists, atheists, and enemies of religion have to be attacked. Period.[28]

When Hanung Bramantyo wanted to make a film about 1965–1966 with Prananto as scriptwriter, Prananto declined as he felt that the topic was too serious; he preferred to write lighter material. As discussed in Chapter 3, Bramantyo made two horror films with reference to 1965 (*Lentera Merah* in 2006 and *Legenda Sundel Bolong* in 2007), they were not only cut by the LSF, but a scheduled television broadcast was met with protests. Other films set in the political turmoil of the 1960s such

26. Personal interview, October 22, 2008.
27. "Eros Djarot Gagal Buat Film Lastri," *Kompas*, November 14, 2008.
28. "Karena itu tadi saya punya feeling tentang kebebasan berekspresi itu hanya elit, kalangan pemikir, intelektual itu sudah bisa mengapresiasikan bisa menerima ternyata yang dulu ditahan waktu PKI itu belum tentu salah. Ini ada rekayasa sejarah, itu yang mengetahui hanya kalangan selapis ini. Mungkin benar, tapi cuman segini yang tahu, tapi yang lain yang sebanyak itu tahunya itu komunis, komunis ateis dan musuh agama harus kita gempur. Udah titik." Jujur Prananto, personal interview, December 5, 2008.

as *Gie* (Riri Riza, 2005) and *Sang Penari* (*The Dancer*, Ifa Isfansyah, 2011) have been careful in their representations.

While filmmakers can understand that some content is controversial and needs to be addressed with caution, they were increasingly troubled by the inconsistencies of the LSF and the lack of transparency in its censorship criteria. Filmmakers wanting to use films as a means to describe or comment on contemporary society found themselves at odds with the LSF's unofficial mission to protect the image of the nation and the state. For example, producer Erwin Arnada of Rexinema, described his experience with *Jakarta Undercover* (Lance, 2006),[29] a film about a striptease dancer who witnesses a murder:

> The cut was of a scene with the police, not a dancing scene: a scene in which the police were being paid off. Mostly it is those realistic scenes that are cut. In actual fact the scene of the police accepting money is a representation of reality in . . . A lot of us if we are booked [by the police], you give them money, and it's over. We all know that if we are driving, we get stopped, we pay, clear, finished. But we cannot show it in film, it gets cut.[30]

As with *The Army Forced them to be Violent*, the LSF sees its role as protecting the state and its agencies from negative representation, and by doing so, alters both the recording of historical events and the ability of filmmakers to portray realities of everyday life in Indonesia.

Further uncertainty is created for filmmakers as many do not know the standards and criteria that are applied to films. Although the guidelines on content are available in the 1992 Film Law which governs the LSF's operations, they are not based on objective or graduated criteria, and are vague and open to interpretation. Problems arise when the LSF are seen to be selectively interpreting these rules. When these are translated into actual censorship decisions, Erwin Arnada thinks it results in decisions that are contradictory:

> Sometimes in one film the kissing scene is cut, but in another film it's not. On one poster a man's bellybutton is not allowed but on another poster it is. So they are quite inconsistent.[31]

The LSF does not cut solely on the basis of images, but also according to the context in which it appears. In many cases, morality determines whether depictions of sex,

29. The title comes from a popular book that exposed the sexual nightlife of Jakarta, mostly different forms of prostitution. Erwin Arnada also edited Indonesia's version of *Playboy*.
30. "Itu juga potongan adegan polisi bukan potongan adegan tari-tarian. Adegan polisi yang sedang disuap. Kebanyakan adegan-adegan itu yang realistis yang dipotong. Sebenarnya adegan polisi yang terima suap, itu adalah gambaran yang realita di . . . Banyak kita kalau ditilang, kita bayar selesai. Kita semua taulah kalo dijalanan, ditilang, kita bayar, damai, selesai. Tapi nggak bisa di film, itu aja yang dipotong." Erwin Arnada, personal interview, June 16, 2008.
31. "Mereka kadang-kadang mendua sih. Tidak punya sistematika yang baku sebenarnya kayak apa. Kadang ada di sebuah film adegan ciuman dipotong, tapi di film ini nggak. Ada poster yang pusar laki-laki harus nggak boleh tapi di poster yang lain boleh. Jadi emang mendua aja." Erwin Arnada, personal interview, June 16, 2008.

violence, and so on are justified or not. In *Virgin* (Hanny R Saputra, 2005), a film about three high school girls who sleep with older men for money, the sex scenes were left intact. Whereas *Virgin* is a moral condemnation of pre-marital sex, the kissing scenes in *Buruan Cium Gue* or *3 Hari untuk Selamanya* (*3 Days to Forever*, Riri Riza, 2007) were cut because they were seen to celebrate, rather than condemn, youth sexuality.

Vindictive censorship and moral policing were even more evident in the prominent case of the unreleased film *ML (Mau Lagi)* (*ML [Want it Again]*), an Indonesian version of popular US sex-comedy *American Pie* (Paul Weitz and Chris Weitz, 1999).[32] Like the original, two boys make a deal that within a month Wisnu (Hardi Fadhillah), a virgin, must finally have sex, and Mario (Taufan Wahyudi), a womanizer, must be celibate. The film garnered controversy, not just because of the suggestive title—"ML" is slang for "make love" or to have sex—but because an uncensored trailer was released on the internet that suggested the film had copious sex scenes. In the film, these are tempered by the moral lesson against promiscuity when at the end Mario discovers he has herpes. When it was submitted for censorship, the LSF reportedly cut fifteen meters of the print (about one minute of footage). Titie Said claimed that this was necessary because the film purported to talk about the risk of HIV/AIDS in its publicity material, not herpes. Yet *ML*'s harsh treatment at the hands of the censors suggested that the LSF reacted out of spite because of the buzz the uncensored film trailer had generated. Producer Shanker spent the next six months reworking the film, adding a long lecture from famous sexologist Dr. Boyke at the end telling viewers not to engage in premarital sex. It was finally released under the safer title *Cintaku Selamanya* (*My Love Forever*, Thomas Nawilis, 2008) and performed badly at the box-office.

As much as filmmakers wanted to push boundaries and explore forms of personal expression and commercial experimentation, they found themselves continually frustrated by an LSF that applied its own moral and political judgements. *Reformasi* was supposed to herald an era of looser expression and a media free from repressive state influence. Yet over the past decade, as it has sought to redefine its role, the LSF has found itself caught between the demands of filmmakers and the demands of reactionary civil society groups. The LSF has found it easier to revert to its conservative role as censor, and to be seen to side with the concerns of the "people," rather than protecting the rights of filmmakers who are seen as a privileged liberal minority. Internally too, the LSF is little changed and maintains a modus operandi reminiscent of the New Order. In total, between 1998 and 2007 sixteen films were cut and one was banned outright.[33] Filmmakers have found themselves

32. Scriptwriter Awi Suryadi said the film was based on *American Pie*, and the tagline "Indonesian Pae bukan American Pie" is a reference to the American film. Personal interview, June 6, 2008.

33. *Kuldesak* (*Cul-de-sac*, Rizal Mantovani, Riri Riza, Nan Achnas, and Mira Lesmana, 1998), *The Army Forced Them to Be Violent* (Tino Saroengallo, 1998), *Buruan Cium Gue!* (*Kiss Me Quick!*, Findo Purwono HW, 2004), *Gie* (Riri Riza, 2004), *9 Naga* (*9 Dragons*, Rudi Soedjarwo, 2005), *Tales of Crocodile* (Jan van den Berg, 2003), *Timor Loro Sae* (Vitor Lopes, 2003), *Passabe* (James Leong and Lynn Lee, 2005), *Black Road* (William

hamstrung by the LSF and unable to engage with an institution that is out of date, only deepening the mistrust and resentment towards an institution that many feel should be standing up for filmmakers.

The Banning of *Dendam Pocong*

In many places, filmmakers learn to live with censorship regimes, often coming up with innovative ways of getting around politically or culturally sensitive topics. Over time, Indonesian directors and producers learned the dos and don'ts of censorship in post-1998 Indonesia and adjusted their productions accordingly. Yet this was harder than it was under the New Order when the taboo topics where more clearly known. This did not mean that filmmakers did not push the boundaries, but many reduced their risks, knowing that it was better to play safe than face disruptive protests or the ire of a publicity-seeking moral guardian. Yet many young filmmakers wanted to maintain their creative and critical edge by pushing boundaries and taking risks, even if they were aiming for a mainstream audience. Two of these filmmakers were Monty Tiwa and Rudi Soedjarwo who courted controversy with a number of their titles. Their 2006 film *Dendam Pocong* (*Shrouded*) became the first film to be banned by the LSF after 1998. Although the case went largely unnoticed by the filmmaking community, it had serious implications for Indonesian filmmakers and their standing with the censorship board.

Before making *Dendam Pocong*, Soedjarwo and Tiwa had earned a reputation as two of the most daring of the young generation of filmmakers with *9 Naga* (*9 Dragons*, 2005).[34] In the promotional poster for *9 Naga*, a bare-chested man stands against a black background with the tagline "*Manusia terbaik di Indonesia adalah seorang penjahat*" ("The best person in Indonesia is a criminal"). The LSF took issue with the visible bellybutton and pubic hair, and, especially, with the provocative tagline. Titie Said expressed the LSF's concerns:

> Really it's not nice a sentence like that. There will be a lot of people who see the poster. Don't generalize like that. Lots of people try to do good things for this country without becoming criminals. We want this country to become a good country. We just don't want that sentence to be taken negatively.[35]

Nessen, 2006), *Promised Paradise* (Leonard Retel Helmrich, 2006), *Berbagi Suami* (*Love to Share*, Nia Dinata, 2006), *Lentera Merah* (*Red Lantern*, Hanung Bramantyo, 2006), *Pocong 2* (Rudi Soedjarwo, 2006), *Long Road to Heaven* (Enison Sinaro, 2007), *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya* (*3 Days to Forever*, Riri Riza, 2007), *Maaf Saya Menghamili Istri Anda!* (*Sorry, I Impregnated Your Wife*, Monty Tiwa, 2007), and *Dara* (Timo Tjahjanto and Kimo Stamboel, 2007). Kusuma and Haryanto, "Sensor Film di Indonesia."

34. "9 Naga" refers to nine big business moguls who supposedly form a mafia organization in Indonesia.

35. "Aduh kok ndak enak ya kalimat seperti itu.' Tentunya akan banyak orang yang melihat poster itu. Ya jangan digebyah-uyah (disamaratakan—Red) seperti itu. Banyak orang akan berbuat yang terbaik untuk bangsa ini, tapi kan bukan dengan jadi penjahat. Kita ingin bangsa ini menjadi bangsa yang baik. Kami cuma tidak ingin kalimat itu ditafsirkan negatif." Quoted in "Film '9 Naga' Kesandung Poster dan Puser," *Kompas*, December 13, 2005.

Figure 7.1: Monty Tiwa poses in front of the poster for *9 Naga* (*9 Dragons*, Rudy Soedjarwo, 2006) with the infamous bellybutton. The tagline reads: "The best person in Indonesia is a criminal." Photograph from Tempo / Gunawan Wicaksono.

9 Naga is about three two-bit hit-men who try to escape their profession but tragically fail. The film passed the LSF because it was not excessively violent, did not glorify crime, and because the film ends tragically.[36] But what was not allowed was the inverted sense of right and wrong in the tagline and poster that did not condemn criminals or criminality.

9 Naga was indicative of what was to come with *Dendam Pocong*, scheduled for release a year later. While most horror films that employ the revenge narrative limit themselves to isolated incidents of sexual abuse and murder or to unspecified events

36. Despite the controversy, it attracted an audience of less than 200,000. Soedjarwo regards it as his best film. Personal interview, Rudi Soedjarwo, July 19, 2008.

in history, *Dendam Pocong* was explicitly set during the 1998 riots, during which houses and shops owned by ethnic Chinese were looted and destroyed, people were killed, and scores of Chinese women were sexually assaulted and raped.[37] Scriptwriter Tiwa wrote the script in response to these events. The content of the film was violent in parts as described in Chapter 3, and very explicit about its links to the events of May 1998. The film suggests that all the killing, and by extension the May 1998 riots itself, are the result of misunderstanding.

The LSF was unequivocal in its decision to ban the film, citing nine points where they thought it was inappropriate.[38] The only other person outside the production team and the LSF to have seen it says that the opening sequence showing the riots and violence is particularly graphic.[39] The crux of the LSF decision rested on their belief that the film "has the potential to provoke revenge or open old wounds from the bloody events of May 1998."[40] Said elaborated the LSF's reasoning to me:

> So we thought about it, this can reignite the community, [their] trauma. This is revenge with revenge; cruelty with cruelty; murder answered by murder; rape answered by rape. Later there will be retribution.[41]

Not only does the LSF presume to predict the effect the film will have on audiences, but it fails to understand that the minority Chinese who were the primary victims of the May 1998 riots have no ability to enact revenge. Most of the audience of *Dendam Pocong* would have been middle- to lower-class teenagers who were peripheral to the violence of May 1998. Instead, the LSF's position is in line with the state's response to the 1998 violence, namely that it should be forgotten, not retold or remembered, out of fear of potential "revenge."[42] Again, their reasons still rely on the perceived "potential" which can easily be used to justify the banning or cutting of any film. For the censorship board, film is still a repository of powerful images, and as with *The Army Forced Them to Be Violent*, content is censored so that history is presented or remembered in only limited ways.

The filmmakers were disappointed with the LSF decision, especially producer Leo Sutanto who lost his three-billion-rupiah investment. They had no avenues of recourse or appeal, and Tiwa remains disappointed at the LSF and the reasons given by Said:

> I was devastated. I feel the opposite of her. One of the most important duty of a film is to be a reflection of its society. To always be a reminder of our past, an update

37. For a more complete account see Purdey, "Problematizing the Place."
38. Based on the official synopsis and information from Veronica Kusuma who viewed it as part of her research into Indonesian horror films.
39. Kusuma, "Hantu-Hantu."
40. "Dan dapat berpotensi membangkitkan dendam atau luka lama akibat peristiwa berdarah Mei 1998" said Titie Said, quoted in "Pocong Terkubur Sensor," *Tempo*, October 17, 2006.
41. "Terus kita pikir, ini nanti bisa menimbulkan gejolak masyarakat, trauma. Ini balas dendam dengan balas dendam; kekejaman dengan kekejaman; pembunuhan dibalas pembunuhan; perkosaan dibalas perkosaan. Ini nanti ada pembalasan." Titie Said, personal interview, May 28, 2008.
42. Cribb, "Unresolved Problems," 562.

> of our present and an imagination of what the future might hold. If all the bad things (in this case the massacre) should be forgotten like what the censor board suggested, I fear the future generation will repeat the same mistake.[43]

Director Soedjarwo thinks that they banned the film because it demonstrated that:

> Humans are more frightening than ghosts. Those who actually rape and murder are humans. The real evil is mankind. Yet it's not allowed to be shown like that.[44]

That is, humans are actually more malevolent than ghosts because "ghosts cannot kill, rob and rape,"[45] a particularly pertinent point in a country with such a bloody past. As a result the film has never been released in Indonesia and has been screened only once to a limited audience at a US-based online film festival in 2008.[46] Soedjarwo and Tiwa worked on and released a sequel called *Pocong 2* (2006), which despite its success seems to have precipitated the end of their partnership. Neither have returned to such controversial material, concentrating on safer, commercial projects. The potential of a new paradigm in filmic representation had clearly been shown the limits of permissible representation by the LSF.

Challenging the Film Censorship Board

As film production increased after 2003, more young filmmakers realized that the LSF was gaining legitimacy and becoming more, not less, restrictive. Although palpably frustrated, filmmakers had no means of collective representation and each director or producer dealt with the LSF individually. In 2006, reform-minded filmmakers found their call to action when *Ekskul* (*Extracurricular*, Nayato Fio Nuala, 2006), produced by Shanker RS of Indika Entertainment, won the Citra Award for best film at that year's FFI (Festival Film Indonesia, Indonesian Film Festival). *Ekskul* had featured unlicensed music from Hollywood films and concerned filmmakers argued that the FFI was clearly unprofessional in selecting a film that had plagiarized music from other films. A number of reform-minded filmmakers and others in the industry came together as Masyarakat Film Indonesia (MFI, Indonesian Film Community) and staged a public protest in which many returned the Citra they had won at previous FFI.[47] They not only demanded that the Citra for *Ekskul* be revoked

43. Monty Tiwa, personal correspondence, December 12, 2009.
44. "Kita tunjukin human is more menakutkan daripada setan gitu lah. Karena yang memperkosa dan membunuh itu kan manusia jadi setannya manusia. Oh ya nggak boleh gitu." Personal interview, July 19, 2008.
45. "Karena setan tidak bisa membunuh, merampok, dan memperkosa." Rudi Soedjarwo quoted in "Pocong Terkubur Sensor," *Tempo*, October 17, 2006.
46. Insomnifest 2008, http://www.insomnifest.com/films/shrouded.htm.
47. Prominent members of MFI included Abduh Azis (Jakarta Arts Council), Mira Lesmana (producer), Nia Dinata (producer), Ody C. Harahap (director), Riri Riza (director), Shanty Harmayn (producer), Tino Saroengallo (line producer), Hanung Bramantyo (director), Prima Rusdi (scriptwriter), Joko Anwar (director and scriptwriter). For a full list, see "About Us," http://masyarakatfilmindonesia.wordpress.com/about/.

Figure 7.2: Composer Melly Goeslaw returns her Piala Citra in solidarity with other filmmakers protesting against government unprofessionalism and poor support of the film industry in January 2007. Photograph from Kompas / Arbain Rambey.

but wanted wholesale institutional reform. The MFI felt that the problems of professionalism were not isolated to the FFI, but to all government institutions regulating film including the LSF. Their list of demands included transparency, democracy, and professionalism in state film institutions; government support for the industry; revision of the 1992 Film Law No. 8; and conversion of the LSF into a film classification board.[48] In June 2007, a year and a half later, the Citra for *Ekskul* was revoked by the head of the BP2N, Deddy Mizwar.

Although the MFI struggled to garner support beyond a small group of filmmakers and concerned citizens, in September 2007 they lodged a petition at the Constitutional Court (MK, Mahkamah Konstitusi) arguing that the existence of the LSF violated their constitutionally guaranteed rights to free expression.[49] This was not a new idea: filmmakers in the early 1970s had questioned film regulations on the same grounds,[50] although they did not pursue their argument in court. Even earlier in the 1950s, Dr. Huyung whose film *Antara Bumi dan Langit* (*Between the Earth and the Sky*, 1950) stalled after a Muslim group in Sumatra protested a promotional

48. A full list of the demands and an overview of MFI activities for the period December 2006 to August 2007 can be found at their website. See http://masyarakatfilmindonesia.files.wordpress.com/2007/09/overview_akhir_komdok.pdf.
49. Paragraph 28C Section 1 and Paragraph 28F specifically of the 1945 Constitution.
50. Gayus Siagian, *Menilai Film* (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 2006), 57–58.

picture that showed the lead couple kissing, made impassioned arguments for the LSF to defend films they had censored and passed for public viewing.[51] *Reformasi* seemed to provide the MFI with an opportunity to legally challenge the LSF, given the decline in state hegemony and the establishment of the Constitutional Court in 2003 as a result of post-1998 institutional reform. MFI members Mira Lesmana, Riri Riza, Shanty Harmayn and Abduh Azis represented the MFI. In their submission, they used their own work to substantiate their argument that the LSF violated their constitutional right to free speech.

In *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya* (*3 Days to Forever*, Riri Riza, 2007) three scenes involving drug taking and one sex scene were cut, totaling one hundred seconds. In what is a celebration of modern youth culture, the story follows the journey of two young adults as they drive from Jakarta to Yogyakarta to deliver a family heirloom tea set and, along the way, develop a close bond despite their initial abrasions. Both characters are recreational drug users and are carefree about it, and in one scene Ambar (Adinia Wirasti) goes to a party in Bandung where she consumes ecstasy. During the journey, they seem to have sex, although the viewer can never actually know because of the way it is censored. *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya* encapsulates the new moral sensibilities of the young generation of cosmopolitan filmmakers—and by extension young Indonesians—as it celebrates the coming of age of two characters who are free from traditional morality. In the eyes of the LSF however, these ideas and actions are dangerous and warrant censoring.

Even though *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya* might be an accurate representation of contemporary Indonesian youth culture, the LSF regarded it as glorification rather than condemnation and therefore required censoring. The cut sex scene is ambiguous, and only serves to raise questions about the sexual relationship. It is made more inconclusive because the final scene shows the couple meeting "nine months later" (the term of a human pregnancy). Regarding the drug-taking scenes, the LSF asked at the MK hearing:

> Are the censored parts, that show negative elements, being protested because the director considers the LSF has 'already disturbed the portrait of Indonesian youth which is being portrayed in this film?' Is it the intention of the director to show Young Generation Indonesians taking DRUGS MERRILY??? [emphasis in original][52]

The usual portrayal of drug use in Indonesian films show it leading to despair, criminality, devastation, or death such as in *Detik Terakhir* (*Final Moment*, Nanang Istiabudi, 2005). Supported by the National Narcotics Bureau, the film introduces

51. Huyung, Dr., "Apa jang harus masuk dalam Undang2 Film Baru," *Aneka* 4 (1951): 17; Huyung, Dr., "Tjatatan Film," *Aneka* 7 (1952): 13.

52. "Apakah hal-hal negatif seperti ini yang diprotes pemotongannya karena sutradara menganggap LSF "telah mengganggu keutuhan karakter anak muda Indonesia yang hendak digambarkan/dipotret dalam film dimaksud?" Maksud sutradara apakah ingin menunjukkan Generasi Muda Indonesia yang ber-NARKOBA RIA???" "Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film Bag.4," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.

Regi (Cornelia Agatha), whose parents are constantly fighting, as she starts to take drugs, becomes a lesbian, and then watches her girlfriend die from an overdose. Cultural statements like *3 Hari Untuk Selamanya* that portray a different view of youth lifestyle are censored because portrayal without condemnation or moral lesson is considered endorsement and instructive by the LSF.

Riri Riza's earlier film *Gie* (2004), a biography of sixties activist and nationalist Soe Hok Gie (1942–1969), had been similarly censored. The scene showing Gie and his girlfriend kissing was cut. To justify their decision, the LSF first argued "it is not possible [they would have] been kissing" in that time period, then added that "the kissing scene is arousing, as it is conducted full of passion."[53] Later, the LSF claimed the cuts were necessary in order to "respect the character of Soe Hok Gie" because the scene would "give rise to aspersion which would tarnish his reputation."[54] Ironically, by cutting the kissing scene the opposite effect was produced. After watching the censored version of *Gie*, Lisabona Rahman and Paul Agusta have drawn attention to the homoerotic overtones of Gie's (Nicholas Saputra) friendships with Han (Thomas Nawilis) and Herman Lantang (Lukman Sardi), calling *Gie* "the first homoerotic Indonesian movie in 20 years."[55] With the kissing scene gone, the sexual orientation of Gie is left ambiguous. If it was indeed the LSF's intention to avoid aspersion, their prescribed cuts had quite the opposite effect.

Other examples brought to the MK included Annisa Nurul Shanty K, an actress in *Berbagi Suami* (*Love for Share*, Nia Dinata, 2006). In *Berbagi Suami*, the LSF cut much of the sex scene showing the first-night between a polygamous husband and his most recent wife. The film was trying to dramatize the trauma of the event for the new wife, but the LSF found the representation of the first night contrary to the sanctity of marriage. Lalu Rois Amriradhiani from the Jakarta International Film Festival (Jiffest) brought further cases of films that had been rejected outright since the festival began in 1999, many dealing with the conflicts and oppression in Aceh, Papua, and East Timor.

The MK case encapsulated a cultural clash between culturally progressive filmmakers who use film as a means of cultural and political expression, and the LSF, which emphasizes the role of film in maintaining social harmony and in avoiding improper representations of Indonesia and its people.[56] At the same time, it brought into the public eye the arguments and views of the LSF members and government

53. "tidak mungkin melakukan ciuman" and "adegan ciuman yang merangsang, yang dilakukan dengan penuh birahi." 'Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film Bag.4," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.
54. "adegan ciuman yang merangsang, yang dilakukan dengan penuh birahi" . . . "menimbulkan fitnah yang justru akan merendahkan martabatnya" . . . "untuk menghormati sosok Soe Hok Gie" "Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film Bag.4," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.
55. Lisabona Rahman, "History, Propaganda, and Perception: A Conversation on Gie," *Criticine*, October 20, 2005. http://www.criticine.com/review_article.php?id=9. Lisabona Rachman was formerly a journalist and film critic with *The Jakarta Post*. She now works as film programmer at the Kineforum Indonesia, the art cinema in Jakarta. Paul Agusta is a film director and Film Curator at Komunitas Utan Kayu.
56. Lembaga Sensor Film, "Jawaban Terinci Lembaga Sensor Film. Bag.1," Lembaga Sensor Film. http://webs.lsf.go.id/.

officials, allowing normally secretive officials to be questioned in a public forum. The MFI briefly bridged the gap between senior producers and the younger generation of filmmakers when producers Leo Sutanto and Chand Parwez Servia supported the MFI in the early stages. They however withdrew when the case went to court, which MFI member Abduh Azis attributed to their ethnic minority status.[57] The only expert witness from the New Order film industry to support their case was outspoken producer Budiyati Abiyoga, famous for having produced many of Garin Nugroho's films in the 1990s.[58] On April 30, 2008, the Constitutional Court upheld the legality of the LSF but required that the government revise the 1992 Film Law in their current term as it was no longer suitable. The ruling was not unanimous, with one judge (Laica Marzuki) expressing a dissenting opinion, agreeing with the petitioners that the LSF did infringe upon their rights as filmmakers.

Overall, the MFI found that the arguments put forward by the LSF, the Ministry, and their expert witnesses were incoherent, unsubstantiated, and speculative.[59] "Without a film censorship body," Said argued, "our identity as a nation would soon perish."[60] She was supported by Minister of Culture and Tourism Jero Wacik, who stated in his submission that the MFI case was "unfocussed, hazy and unclear," and that the LSF was in place to ensure films "do not clash with cultural values, morals, public order and religious values."[61] Not only did these arguments fail to placate members of the MFI, the debate marked the ideological distinction between the establishment, many of whom were New Order figures, and young filmmakers versed in the ideas of media freedom and individual rights. Many of the arguments put forward by the LSF are reminiscent of the logic of order and stability promulgated under the New Order.[62] Following the decision, Said expressed her relief at the outcome: "We are thankful. If the Film Censorship Board had been dissolved, we would have returned to a primitive state again."[63]

MFI member Abduh Azis said they were not surprised at the defeat, but felt that their major victory was in forcing the government to revise the 1992 Film Law.[64] The case also revealed how the government, and in particular the Culture

57. Abduh Azis, personal interview, August 6, 2008.
58. Budiyati Abiyoga is a well-known producer of less commercial films, a vocal opponent of the encroaching Subentra monopoly in the early 1990s. Other witnesses were Amir E. Siregar (academic from UGM), Fadjroel Rahman (reformist researcher), Gunawan Mohammad (founder and editor of *Tempo*), Seno Gumira Ajidarma (writer, film scholar and IKJ lecturer), Tito Amanda (film scholar), and Mira Lesmana (producer).
59. See the report written by MFI member Prima Rusdi "Soal Pulau di Tengah Samudra, Pagar, dan Iblis: Catatan Ringkas Persidangan 24 Januari 2008." http://masyarakatfilmindonesia.wordpress.com/2008/01/26/soal-pulau-di-tengah-samudra-pagardan-iblis-catatan-ringkas-persidangan-24-januari-2008/.
60. Quoted in "Minister Backs Film Censorship Board," *The Jakarta Post*, January 11, 2008, 9.
61. See section 3.16 'Keterangan Pemerintah" of Risalah Sidang Perkara Nomor 29/PUU-V/2007, available at http://www.mahkamahkonstitusi.go.id/putusan/risalah_sidang_Perkara%2029%20%20puu%20V%20-2007%2030%20April%202008%20_PUTUSAN_.pdf.
62. For a discussion of similar arguments in relation to the need to censor literature, see John H. McGlynn, "Silenced Voices, Muted Expressions: Indonesian Literature Today," *Manoa* 12, no. 1 (2000): 38–44.
63. "Kami bersyukur. Seandainya saja Lembaga Sensor Film itu dibubarkan, berarti kita kembali ke masa hutan belantara lagi." Quoted in "Gunting Sensor Tetap Bergerak," *Tempo*, May 11, 2008, 86.
64. Personal interview, August 6, 2008.

and Tourism Minister Jero Wacik, understood the creative process, and the effect film consumption has on audiences. MFI member Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka wrote in an opinion piece that this patronizing attitude of the LSF and the Minister was reminiscent of Dutch colonial policy towards the natives (*inlander*).[65] The LSF used a slippery slope argument to construct itself as a bastion of morality preventing the nation's descent into barbarism. These were not encouraging signs for filmmakers hoping that *reformasi* would have altered the rhetoric and perceptions of government officials and agencies responsible for film. The failure of the MFI to capture broad support from the public, especially cinema-goers, made it seem as if their case was based on self-interest making it easier to dismiss.

A Different Challenge

Soon after the MFI defeat in the Constitutional Court, the fight over the right to screen controversial films erupted again, but this time from an initiative of journalists, not filmmakers. A screening of the Australian film *Balibo* (Robert Connolly, 2009), a film about the five Australian journalists killed in East Timor in 1975,[66] was organized at the Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Club for journalists and then at the Jakarta International Film Festival (Jiffest) in December 2009 for the general public. Whilst an important episode for the East Timorese and for journalists, the Indonesian state continues to deny that the five journalists were killed by the Indonesian military in order to prevent them from filming the Indonesian invasion of the former Portuguese colony. Two hours before *Balibo* was to be screened, the film was not passed by the LSF and effectively banned without any official reason. Jiffest had submitted the film to the LSF, and had history of bringing in challenging or controversial films including those that covered sensitive topics such as conflict in Aceh, East Timor, and Papua.[67] In these cases, the LSF bans films for reasons of "social order," meaning the films often go against or question how these conflict areas have been presented to the public by the state and the military. The fact that Jiffest caters to a culturally elite Jakartan audience and only screens the films once or twice does not factor into their decisions.

Given previous failed attempts by Jiffest with similar contentious films, it was not surprising that *Balibo* was banned. The LSF provided no official explanation, but Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa commented, saying that "What we have to be cautious of, is to not let this film affect the global perception of Indonesia. If it [the

65. Nirwan Ahmad Arsuka, "Sensor dan Kebebasan," *Kompas*, January 27, 2008.
66. On October 16, 1975 five Western journalists in Balibo on assignment were killed during the incursion prior to the invasion by the Indonesian military. The Indonesian military maintained that they were killed in the cross-fire.
67. Jiffest began in 1999. *Tales of Crocodile* (Jan van den Berg, 2003), *Timor Loro Sae* (Vitor Lopes, 2003), *Passabe* (James Leong and Lynn Lee, 2005), *Black Road* (William Nessen, 2006). These were films brought in by Jiffest and they were subsequently rejected by the LSF.

ban] is explained well, then I think there will be no problem."[68] The ban provoked significant controversy and discussion within Indonesia, with many voicing their support of the film. The ban was imposed not to protect Indonesia from outside opinion insomuch as to maintain a particular narrative of history domestically—in this case, how East Timor was annexed and the fate of five foreign journalists.[69] Not surprisingly therefore, military spokesman Air Vice Marshall Sagom Tamboen was described as being "jubilant" at the ban.[70] Members of the military sit on the LSF boards and would have had a strong influence on the decision. In defiance, members of the Association of Indonesian Journalists (AJI) vowed to screen the film, which they did at informal screenings, risking fines and imprisonment. Within days, pirated copies quickly became available as interest in the now controversial film soared.

Yet the banning brought attention to the events in East Timor and the freedom of the media, particularly film. The involvement of the press no doubt played a large part as previous bannings of Jiffest films had gone largely unreported. Within days, retired Air Marshall Prawanto, in an interview with *Tempo*,[71] revealed that the Australian journalists had in fact been killed by the military and implicated Yunus Yosfiah (former Minister of Information from 1998 to 1999) as having given the orders to shoot.[72] Jero Wacik, the Minister responsible for film, claimed that he could not interfere in the decisions of the LSF and allow the film to screen.[73] Nevertheless Wacik was in agreement with the LSF's position saying that "For the sake of the country, the movie is not fit for playing in theaters. The movie is political."[74] By screening *Balibo*, journalists showed that it was possible to defy state institutions and challenge state narratives over history. Journalists drew on their tradition of opposition and collective action and were able to articulate their position to the public. This differed from how filmmakers presented themselves and their oppositional interests. Filmmakers were ineffectual in their challenge to the institutions of censorship that most directly affected their work.

68. Markus Junianto Sihaloho and Putri Prameshwari, "'Balibo' Ban Wins Rave Reviews from Indonesian Military," *The Jakarta Globe*, December 3, 2009.
69. In Australia itself, *Balibo Five* was criticized because it seemed to downplay the Australian government's knowledge of and complicity in the 1974 annexation of East Timor. Only one scene, in which the Australian Prime Minister and President Suharto are shown shaking hands on the front cover of a newspaper, suggests this was the case.
70. Markus Junianto Sihaloho and Putri Prameshwari, "'Balibo' Ban Wins Rave Reviews from Indonesian Military," *The Jakarta Globe*, December 2, 2009.
71. See "Killings of Balibo Five Were Deliberate, Says Former Army Colonel," *The Australian*, December 7, 2009. Kinanti Pinta Karana and Markus Junianto Sihaloho, "'We Killed Balibo 5,' Former Indonesian Soldier Says," *The Jakarta Globe*, December 8, 2009.
72. In 1975 Yunus Yosfiah was a captain of the Indonesian Special Forces (Kopassus).
73. Wacik's claim that he could not get involved in the *Balibo Five* case contradicted his involvement in the case of *Buruan Cium Gue* five years earlier. In both, he acted to preserve the authority of the government.
74. "People Want East Timor Massacre Banned, Indonesian Military Says," *The Jakarta Globe*, December 4, 2009.

The Irony of *Reformasi*

Replacing the 1992 Film Law was the culmination of filmmaker efforts to reform film institutions after the end of the New Order. When the new film law was finally legislated on September 8, 2009, by the parliament (DPR, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat) after a relatively brief deliberation in order to have it legislated before the end of the sitting term, the result was a huge disappointment to the film community. Nine factions within the DPR supported the new law, with only the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) abstaining. The process involved little consultation with or involvement from members of the industry and failed to involve the BP2N (Badan Pertimbangan Perfilman Negara), the peak consultative body responsible for recommending film policy to the government. Senior actor and then head of the BP2N, Deddy Mizwar was reported to have responded in mumbles saying "This country is doomed, this country is doomed!"[75] As the law was being deliberated, a loose Coalition of Film People (Koalisi Masyarakat Film) formed to represent the interests of filmmakers and included members of the MFI and other normally reluctant producers such as Raam Punjabi and Chand Parwez Servia. The law however, was drafted, deliberated, and legislated with minimal input from those it affected.

The law was desperately needed by a film industry looking for positive support from the state to help sustain local production and strengthen the institutions needed to support further industry growth, especially educational institutions to train future filmmakers. Instead, the law was written by parliamentarians with little understanding or interest in film, and whose concept of film was still embedded in an old paradigm that saw film as a media of mass communication that should be controlled. The law reintroduced restrictive measures over filmmaking, including requiring pre-production approval from the Department of Culture and Tourism. A 60 percent screening quota was introduced, similar to those in South Korea and Malaysia, but many feared it would have the effect of encouraging poor quality productions just to fill the quota.[76] Perhaps the only concession to the MFI was the introduction of a classification system. However, these classifications did not replace censorship, and the onus is now on filmmakers to self-censor their own productions before submission to the LSF for review.

Filmmakers found the unsubstantiated claims from Minister Jero Wacik—that the new film law would help the film industry—to be mere talk. Director Hanung Bramantyo, whose film *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2008) was praised by Wacik for reviving the local film industry, was particularly scathing of the government:

75. Quoted in Dalih Sembiring, "Mourning the Passage of Indonesia's Film Bill," *The Jakarta Globe*, September 8, 2009.
76. Thomas Barker and Veronica Kusuma, "The New Law Will Put Films Back in the Box," *The Jakarta Post*, September 9, 2009.

> They do not know our struggle in making a film. We organize the permits, face local gangsters, complete all technical requirements, all of it by ourselves. There is no subsidy from the government. Yet when the film is finished, the LSF cuts it arbitrarily. When it goes to the cinemas, the audiences are taxed, and that money does not come to us.[77]

The 2009 film law ignored the arguments that the film community had been putting forward for years about taxes, regulations, government support, and censorship. Producer Mira Lesmana had been at the forefront of transparency by publishing accounts from a number of Miles Films productions to show how government tax policies affected her company's profitability. One of the few concessions has been the establishment of a new film body called Badan Perfilman Indonesia (BPI) designed to inform policy debate for the film industry.

Disorganization amongst the Ranks

Democratization enabled civil society to freely organize, associate and form interest groups, and to push for and advance their interests. In post–New Order Indonesia, a myriad of new organizations have emerged making claims on the state, seeking power and influence, and trying to change policy and influence law making. Yet the groups that were so effective in organizing to topple Suharto, and who had hoped to restructure the government and the bureaucracy, found themselves at a loss once the euphoria of *reformasi* evaporated. Tino Saroengallo reflects on the results of *reformasi* and regime-change in his introspective documentary film *Setelah 15 Tahun* (*15 Years Later*, 2013). Within a few years, old power structures reasserted themselves, particularly those that coalesced around big business, the military and the political establishment.[78] Middle-class reformers were unable to penetrate the structures of power as they had hoped, and many people have become disillusioned by the political and economic uncertainty of democracy. Instead, more conservative, violent, and reactionary groups advancing anti-liberal agendas have had the most success in shaping policy such as the Anti-Pornography and Pornoaction Law introduced in 2008.[79]

Whilst arguments for political and economic reforms were easier to make and implement, reform in the domain of cultural production have been harder

77. "Mereka enggak tahu bagaimana perjuangan kami membuat sebuah film. Kami mengurus izin, menghadapi preman, menyelesaikan urusan teknis, semua dilakukan sendiri. Tidak ada subsidi dari pemerintah. Tapi ketika film itu jadi, LSF memotong film itu sembarangan. Ketika masuk bioskop, penonton dipungut pajak dan pajak itu enggak lari ke kami." Hanung Bramantyo, interviewed in Rohmat Haryadi, *Saat Bioskop Jadi Majelis Taklim: Sihir Film Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (Jakarta: Hikmah, 2008), 104.
78. Harold Crouch, *Political Reform in Indonesia after Soeharto* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010); Robison and Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia*.
79. Thomas Barker, "Sex on Indonesia's Screens," in *Sex and Sexualities in Indonesia: Sexual Politics, Diversity and Representations in the Reformasi era*, ed. Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies (London: Routledge, 2014).

to articulate and slower in their gestation. Filmmakers have been busy making films, finding funding, fighting off reactionary elements of the public, or defending their film from the LSF, to participate in efforts to reform the film institutions and regulations. Young filmmakers also avoided the existing film organizations such as the KFT (Karyawan Film dan Televisi, Television and Film Workers) and PPFI (Persatuan Produser Film Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Film Producers) which were monopolized by the New Order state for the purposes of control and are now dormant, out of touch, and unrepresentative. The KFT, is the highest body representing film workers but according to director Ody Harahap "they are not trusted"[80] because they are seen as an extension of the state. Similarly, the influential PPFI, is populated by older producers,[81] and thus avoided by young producers because of its associations with the past and proximity to state bureaucracy.

Where young Indonesians have been more active is in film festivals and communities including Jiffest, Q-Film Fest, the long-running NETPAC festival in Yogyakarta, Purbalingga Film Festival, and in websites such as *Rumah Film* and *Sinema Poetica*. Filmmakers' inability to collectivize their interests can be traced to the conditions of *reformasi*, which Adi Wicaksono likens to a "bazaar culture":

> There emerged a number of different communities in the field of culture and politics but they did not converge towards integration. . . . Activities in the bazaar are noisy, but are only a cacophony of events, not an integrated activity that can push the creative energies of the participants to a higher level.[82]

As a result, argues Garin Nugroho, the opposition with which the new creative forces confronted longstanding structures and paradigms was only "half baked" (*setengah matang*).[83] Filmmakers are generally "unaware of the value of organization, and the legal and political protection for the film economy and film works."[84] As a result, it has been difficult for filmmakers to construct a common front to advance their interests, and so they remain disadvantaged in negotiations and their relationships with both the state, cinemas, and producers.

Difficulties in organizing workers is not uncommon in creative industries where the nature of the work, which is project-based, and the perceived lack of professionalism, hinders the formation of industry-led initiatives or organizations able to represent and advocate on behalf of the industry as a whole. In Indonesia there are additional hurdles, both of which relate to how and who the film industry was

80. "Kita nggak punya organisasi yang kuat. Kalau di kita ada sih pekerja film (KFT), cuman masih gitu, tidak dipercaya lah." Ody Harahap, personal interview, October 28, 2008.
81. See Tjasmadi, *100 Tahun Sejarah Bioskop*, 165.
82. "Munculnya berbagai komunitas dalam bidang kerja budaya maupun politik tidak mengerucut pada integrasi. Masing-masing bergerak sendiri, sporadis, mirip budaya bazar dalam masyarakat tradisional. Kegiatan bazar memang riuh, tapi hanya berupa timbunan peristiwa, bukan suatu kegiatan yang terintegrasi yang dapat mendorong daya cipta para peserta ke tingkat yang lebih tinggi." Wicaksono, "Dosa Asal Film Indonesia," 51.
83. Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa*, 92.
84. "kurangnya kesadaran sineas pada nilai penting kelembagaan, perlindungan yuridis dan politis terhadap ekonomi dan penciptaan film." Nugroho, *Seni Merayu Massa*, 92.

rebuilt by after 1998. Organizations that have emerged, such as the MFI, have often been issue-focused but not sustainable in the long-term. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 2, i-sinema which grouped young filmmakers together in the early 2000s, was focused on mutual support for making films, rather than advancing the collective interests of filmmakers as a whole. It too faded as members gained work with other producers and had less time to help fellow i-sinema members with their film projects. Instead, informal relations exist between members of the filmmaking community, with many forming working partnerships (such as Miles Films, or Monty Tiwa and Rudi Soedjarwo), or establishing their own teams.

Organization remains necessary because of the workplace violations and labor issues that have occurred on sets and productions over the last fifteen years. Cases of injuries and deaths on set have received little media coverage, but have troubled film workers. In other cases, contracts are either non-existent or not honored, payments delayed or not-forthcoming, and work hours are not regulated. Currently, no minimum standard exists in the film industry for the regulation and protection of workers and their rights. This is made more difficult by the fact that many production relationships are contract based, meaning that the big production companies leave responsibility for insurance and other matters to the contracted Production Houses (PH) to manage. Seen as another cost, and with many of these teams put together on an informal or mutual-trust basis, insurance is often seen as an additional cost without benefit. Whereas unions in other sectors have strengthened over the past decade,[85] in manufacturing and agriculture for example, the film industry remains fractured and characterized by internal division.

Some in the industry blame individual egos, and the acrimony and division rather than cooperation that they cause. Many filmmakers who are now well-placed struggled to establish themselves, building their own teams, contacts, and relationships. With so much individual investment and effort, Raam Punjabi notes:

> I'm telling you we have a fundamental problem in this industry . . . You see this one fighting with this one, this one fighting with this one. What is happening?[86]

As a result, says Enison Sinaro, "Individual egos are too strong. And the funny thing is it's only 'I'm better than you.' I know both sides, it's silly."[87] Overcoming these individualizing tendencies hinders the ability of filmmakers to form and sustain a collective organization to advance their interests vis-à-vis the state or big producers. Despite succeeding on the cultural front, young filmmakers have struggled to

85. Ed Aspinall, "Popular Agency and Interests in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," *Indonesia* 96, no. 1 (2013): 101–21.

86. "But I'm telling you we have a fundamental problem in this industry. . . . You see this ini berantam sama ini, ini berantam sama ini. What is happening?" Raam Punjabi, personal interview, August 17, 2008.

87. "Orang film sendiri tidak kompak, termasuk generasi muda, tidak kompak. Ego masing-masing terlau keras dan lucunya adalah itu hanya demi gue lebih hebat dari ini. Saya tahu persis kedua sisi, konyol," Enison Sinaro, personal interview, August 15, 2008.

organize themselves as something more than self-interested individuals working in the same field.

The first steps to alter the organizational landscape of the Indonesian film industry came at the initiative of young, independent producers who established APROFI (Association of Indonesian Film Producers) in 2013. Prominent members of APROFI include Mira Lesmana, Shanty Harmayn, Erwin Arnada (Rexinema), Sheila Timothy (Lifelike Pictures), Kimo Stamboel, Dede Meiske (Babi Buta), Abduh Aziz, and Maya Barack Evans. Almost exactly two years later, another grouping was formed called Asosiasi Perusahaan Film Indonesia (APFI, Association of Indonesian Film Companies) with members Chand Parwez Servia, Ody Mulya Hidayat (Maxima Pictures), Erick Tohir (Mahaka Pictures), HB Naveen (Falcon Pictures), Ram Soraya (Soraya Intercine), Gope Samtani (Rapi Films), and Putut Widjanarko (Mizan Pictures). APFI reportedly formed following the disagreement at the 19th PPFI Congress in 2015 when Firman Bintang (BIC Productions) was re-elected as association head (2015–2018), causing Chand Parwez Servia and Ody Mulya Hidayat to resign. For now, with three organizations claiming to represent producer interests, there seems to be a proliferation of organizations rather than a consolidation.

According to the 2009 Film Law, a civil society rather than the government based Indonesian Film Board (BFI, Badan Perfilman Indonesia) was mandated to be formed to represent and advance the film industry and its interests. Following studies since 2010, and a representative forum at the end of 2013 involving fifty-one film and community representatives, a meeting of seventy-four delegates from forty different film organizations was held in January 2014 to finalize and elect representatives to a new body called Indonesian Motion Picture Association (IMPAS). A host of new organizations were also given legal status including Indonesian Film Directors Club,[88] Indonesian Film Producers Association, Cinematographers Indonesia, Indonesian Actors House, Indonesian Production Designers, Indonesian Motion Picture and Audio Society, and Indonesian Casting Association. IMPAS is mandated to discuss issues related to the film industry and its operation, research and development, promotion at overseas festivals, to promote Indonesia as a location, and facilitate funding. Whether it can be effective in this mission remains to be seen.

Conclusion: The Return of the State?

As feature film gained mainstream appeal and visibility, the state found it necessary to reassert regulatory control. At the same time, the impetus of *reformasi* faded as political and economic life normalized following the tumultuous years that followed

88. IFDC was incorporated in 2018 with board members Paul Agusta, Agung Sentausa, Anggy Umbara, Ernest Prakasa, Joko Anwar, Lance Mengong, and Pritagita Arianegara.

the end of the New Order. In these years, the state has been able to implement a new film law, establish new agencies to regulate the creative industries, strengthen the Film Censorship Board, and assert its position much more clearly in the public sphere. In the balance between filmmakers, state, and civil society, it has been filmmakers who have lost power and influence, as the state has increasingly sided with a more vocal and intolerant forces within civil society. This means that the window of opportunity for filmmakers to shape film regulations and policy to better fit with their interests has closed. So far, the administration remains ambivalent about supporting the film industry in any meaningful way. Its tendency has been to reassert forms of control and regulation, rather than extend active support or develop substantive institutions. This suggests that the state will continue to want to interfere in the operation of the film industry both at the economic and the cultural level.

It would be a mistake to read this as a return of the state comparable to a return to the New Order. Indonesia has fundamentally changed due to the tumultuous events of 1998 and the reforms that followed. What the film industry now faces is uncertainty. In part, it requires a new approach to governance by the Indonesian state that recognizes and supports the creative efforts of its citizens. Members of the film industry have articulated their concerns in various forums, publications, and statements over the years. It is now up to the agencies responsible for film to incorporate those concerns into their policy recommendations and decision making. Pop culture is fragile and a delicate balance between conditions of production and the audiences who consume it. The state's role is therefore to regulate, not control. It requires a state supportive but liberal in its orientation to facilitate the articulation of cultural consumption with its production, so that film can dynamically reflect Indonesian society.

Conclusion

Indonesian Cinema as Pop Culture

The process of Indonesian cinema going mainstream required alterations in how films were regulated, planned, financed, made, and screened. Many of these changes were made possible by *reformasi*, which provided the necessary reset and allowed new players to enter the film industry in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These new players reimagined how films were made and what films contained. By making films that appealed to a contemporary audience, a new generation of filmmakers reinvented the cinema as a place for young people to consume pop culture. As the cinema regained its place as a vibrant location for youth culture and as it became a part of the cultural diet of Indonesian youth, it attracted large commercial production companies who have helped sustain the higher rates of production necessary because of their resources and by coupling with the new generation of filmmakers who are able to make attractive and therefore profitable films. Indonesia's film industry today sees a mix of large commercial companies, smaller independent companies, and a small but thriving indie scene. All these ingredients have been essential in helping feature films go mainstream after a decade in the 1990s when feature films were peripheral to mainstream culture.

In Chapter 1, I established that the dominant narrative of Indonesian cinema has been a prescriptive national cinema often referred to as *film nasional*. This narrative was blind to audience tastes and interests and failed to understand the changing technological and social forces between the 1970s and 1990s. When filmmaking restarted after 1998, as detailed in Chapter 2, young filmmakers drew on codes of cultural production they had developed in television, advertising, and music video, aligning cinema with the mainstream codes of cultural representation. In Chapters 3 and 4, I linked developments in the genres of horror and Islamic film to the formation of largescale commercial production and a closer association between filmmakers and the needs and desires of their audiences—both in experiencing the trauma of the New Order and consumption patterns linked new Islamic piety. Chapters 5 and 6 show how the reformed film industry has remained structured by legacy companies and figures in the exhibition sector linked to an oligopoly of large producers who straddle media sectors. In Chapter 7, I consider the regulatory

legacy of the New Order and the ongoing struggles filmmakers have had in dealing with censorship and the government.

In conclusion, I outline the three ways that film in Indonesia can be conceptualized as it consolidates in the second decade after *reformasi*. As outlined in Chapter 1, the predominant way of thinking about cinema in Indonesia has been as *film nasional* which idealizes the filmmaker-as-artist. Given that *film nasional* has historical depth, it continues to be evoked in discussions of film and the film industry. Secondly, the Indonesian government has since 2011 adopted creative industries as its preferred means of approaching cinema, but as the previous chapter showed, the government's record of regulating and promoting the film industry is patchy at best, with tendencies to control and limit rather than support. Thirdly, I suggest that seeing film as pop culture changes the focus to the audience and its consumption patterns, which is consistent with the way in which market relations now shape the film industry and its output.

Film Nasional: The End of the Artist

As discussed in Chapter 1, *film nasional* rests on the premise that a truly Indonesian cinema can only be made by indigenous, idealist, artists. Solidified by the work of key New Order intellectuals such as Salim Said and Misbach Yusa Biran, the *film nasional* position was the dominant interpretation of, and solution to, the film industry's problems. It was based on a retelling of the life and work of Usmar Ismail who was a progenitor of a nationalist cinema in post-independence Indonesia in the 1950s. Although Ismail's own ability to maintain his idealism faltered and his films were not always paradigms of *film nasional*, throughout the New Order he was revered and filmmakers such as Djajakusuma, Arifin C Noer, Sjuman Djaya, Teguh Karya, Slamet Rahardjo, and Wim Umboh were located within the *film nasional* tradition. Through the work of these filmmakers, a new national cinema was to emerge because as artists they were expected to approach film as a medium for the unadulterated expression of their ideas and representations of life. Yet state control, audience tastes, and a commercially-orientated film industry worked against the realization of *film nasional* ambitions. For proponents of *film nasional*, these factors could be overcome given the right mix of state policy, audience support, and filmmaker orientation.

It was therefore expected that after 1998 new idealist filmmakers would emerge after the moribund 1990s to carry the mantle of *film nasional* forward in the footsteps of Ismail and thereby revitalize not only the film industry but also the entire film industry with a less commercial orientation. However, filmmakers working after 1998 were a generation cut off from the events of the 1950s and had little connection to *film nasional*. Almost none of them had experience in theater, unlike the generation of idealists before them. To many of them, Indonesian nationalism had been sullied by the New Order regime which had used national institutions and

nationalist rhetoric to further its own ideological and hegemonic goals, turning many of the symbols of the nation into empty slogans and forms of coercion. Nationalism, as it had been conceived, was bankrupted by the New Order, and young filmmakers wanted to invent something new, turning first to indie and later to the commercial mainstream to realize this. This is not to say that idealist filmmakers did not emerge after 1998: both Edwin and Joko Anwar are post-1998 idealists, despite the fact that their ambitions and politics were not aligned with *film nasional*.

IKJ graduate Edwin hit national headlines when his short film *Kara, Anak Sebatang Pohon* (*Kara, the Daughter of a Tree*, 2005) became the first Indonesian short film to screen at the Director's Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival.[1] This immediately identified Edwin as a talented and provocative filmmaker. His feature films *Babi Buta yang Ingin Terbang* (*Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly*, 2008) and *Kebun Binatang* (*Postcards from the Zoo*, 2012) showed however that his idealism was not directed towards nationalism, but rather forms of contemplative self-expression. Even his more recent commercial work *Posesif* (*Possessive*, 2017) and *Aruna dan Lidahnya* (*Aruna and Her Tongue*, 2018) focus on everyday forms of belonging and experience in Indonesia. In particular *Babi Buta* is a challenging mediation on what it means to be Chinese in Indonesia, dramatizing the history of stigmatization, marginalization, and exploitation that the ethnic Chinese have endured. Here, Edwin's idealism is not directed at celebrating the nation and its independence, but rather describing its shortcomings in protecting its citizens irrespective of background or difference.[2] As an early contender for idealist, Edwin clearly did not conform to *film nasional*'s ideal.

Similarly, Joko Anwar is the other possible candidate, having publicly stated a number of times that he approaches film as an idealist. He has been particularly critical of "filmmakers for hire" who he says are not the same as filmmakers who "have something to say" like himself or Edwin. Looking over his film and television work, Anwar's idealism is quite different to the nationalism of those who precede him. Anwar's definition of idealism is to assert his autonomy and vision as a film director, but it is not an idealism directed towards the nation. His work rarely if at all discusses national issues, with many such as *Kala* (*Dead Time*, 2007), *Pintu Terlarang* (*The Forbidden Door*, 2009), *Modus Anomali* (2012), and *Halfworlds* (2015, HBO Asia), rooted much more firmly in the noir genre. *A Copy of My Mind* (2015) set in Jakarta about two unlikely lovers, does offer a portrait of contemporary Jakarta and the struggles of life, but is not a celebration to the nation. Rather, *A Copy of My Mind* is a study in alienation and despair as the two lovers seek shelter from a dangerous and predatory society.

1. This was the third Indonesian film to screen at Cannes Film Festival after *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* in 1989 and *Daun di Atas Bantal* (Leaf on a Pillow, Garin Nugroho) in 1998.
2. Gaik Cheng Khoo, "Spotlight on the Films of Indonesian Filmmaker Edwin," Asian Cinema 21, no. 2 (September 2010): 135–49. https://doi.org/10.1386/ac.21.2.135_1.

Despite both Edwin and Joko Anwar approaching filmmaking as an artistic endeavor in which idealism rather than commercialism drives their work, neither can be said to be in the same vein of idealism-as-nationalism per *film nasional*. If anything, the assumed relationship between idealism, art, and nationalism have been decoupled in the post *reformasi* era. Nationalism means something very different to the post-1998 generation who did not live through the revolutionary period of the late 1940s and the independence era of the 1950s. Instead, they have emerged following a thirty-two-year period of domestic authoritarianism, in which the Indonesian state and not a foreign colonial power, controlled the population. To them, idealism is much closer to the themes and ideas of the indie movement that emerged in the years following the end of the New Order in which the creative autonomy of the filmmaker is asserted against state control on one hand and big, commercial business interests on the other. For *film nasional* to be relevant after 1998 requires major revision and reconsideration of what national cinema means in the post-authoritarian context. The era of the artist as the conscience and voice of the nation has passed.

Creative Industries: Back to the Future

Given that the state was such a dominant influence over film and culture during the New Order, there has been a continued focus on the state and its role in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Although the state retreated in the decade following *reformasi*, since the new film law in 2009 it has reasserted itself more in the creative space by introducing new regulations, reforming institutions, and seeking to manage the film industry again. Since 2011, the state's approach to the film industry has been shaped by its adoption of a creative industries inspired policy perspective. Creative industries have emerged as a policy discourse over the past fifteen years, and have been adopted by governments in the Southeast Asian region, including in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Conceptualizing film within a larger creative industries framework modernizes the state's approach to the film industry which has for a long time been seen as a unique form of mass media, requiring separate rules and regulations. However, the creative industries discourse carries with it inherent assumptions and priorities that also can be problematic.

"Creative industries" as a concept has become a way for city, state, and national administrations to target the growth and development of a range of activity previously outside the scope of policy-making or subject to different government agencies. For example, national film industries have often had their own dedicated government agency making policy and funding decisions solely for film. By adopting the broader category of creative industries, governments are able to bring together theater, advertising, arts, film, television, media, fashion, architecture, and others under one broader policy umbrella. Since all activities are said to involve some creative input, and produce some kind of cultural product or intellectual

property, then it makes sense to develop a single policy for all of them. This means enhancing media and design courses in higher education, creating a business environment conducive to creative startups, and promoting local content in media channels. There is a clear economic agenda behind creative industries policy, despite the emphasis on creativity and culture, since many administrations see the creative industries as contributing significantly to national income especially if products can be exported overseas.

Indonesia formally adopted a creative industries policy when it established the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2011 to expand the role and scope of the Ministry of Tourism. Mari Pangestu, the former minister of trade from 2004 to 2011 who had promoted creative industries in that role, sought to develop policy to enhance Indonesia's cultural and creative industries, especially for export. Under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy two sub directorates were created: Creative Economy based on Art and Culture and Creative Economy based on Media, Design, and Knowledge. In part this was in response to a recognition that Indonesia has a rich cultural heritage—such as batik—that could be translated into cultural products but also a growing presence in regional and global fashion and media industries. It is also an acknowledgement that there is growing regional competition in the media and creative industries from countries such as Singapore and Malaysia who are both heavily investing in content industries, and trying to attract global entertainment business to their countries. By developing creative industries, governments see an economic benefit in terms of new products and services, but the opportunity to promote forms of national culture abroad and forms of cultural expression domestically.

For Indonesia, two Ministries now have jurisdiction over the film industry. Currently, the legacy film agencies—the LSF and BP2N—sit under the Ministry of Education and Culture, whilst the new film industry umbrella organization IMPAS (Indonesian Motion Picture Association) has been established under the Ministry for Tourism and Creative Economy. The risk here is that the film industry will find itself torn between two models of governance, split between cultural concerns such as content and censorship under one ministry, and economic issues such as regulation, tax, and labor under the other. Based on its record, the Indonesian government has often complicated rather than simplified film industry policy. Film has remained peripheral to the efforts of the state, and often viewed as a threat to the status quo, established narratives of history, and to public order. Moving policy under the umbrella of creative industries seems to liberate film from its current institutional quagmire, moving it into a framework that is much more focused on development and support rather than restraint and control. However, despite the fanfare and excitement generated by the creative industries move, film remains under the same institutional constraints as it has before. Creative industries so far only add another layer of complication, creating further confusion, and pulling the film industry in possibly contradictory directions.

Despite the rhetoric and adoption of a creative industries model, a 2015 corruption scandal engulfed the Directorate of Film and spread to the former minister of tourism, Jero Wacik. This revealed that the attitude and behavior of Indonesian government officials had not changed in line with the new creative industries policy direction. In February 2015, a list of ten government-sponsored delegates to the Berlin International Film Festival set to cost around USD 120,000 (IDR 1.5 billion) for ten days was leaked online via twitter and Facebook. Joko Anwar, who publicized the list wanted to know "Who are these people? . . . Who are these artists Sarah Astriani and Waliani Achmad May? Moreover, who is this 'film supporter' Tini Afianti?"[3] Further investigation revealed that the names on the travel list were members of family, friends, and mistresses of film department officials. As the story gained traction in the media, over 200 members of the filmmaking community signed a petition to protest the blatant misuse of public funds, and the missed opportunity to properly promote Indonesian cinema internationally. The government was forced to act, and after initial denials of culpability Director of Film Industry Development Armein Firmansyah (who had signed off on the list) was sacked, and the delegation was cancelled. Firmansyah had been brought into the Ministry by Tourism Minister Jero Wacik, in part to facilitate corrupt practices.[4] Wacik was subsequently arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) for corruption and jailed for four years in February 2016.

The "Berlinale Gate" scandal as it became known reveals the deep fault line between the government and the film community. This was not the first time that an official delegation meant to promote the film industry overseas had been used as a free holiday by civil servants at the expense of the industry it was meant to promote. Film agencies have for years been conducting trips overseas to "promote" Indonesian films with few results. What was even more galling for the film community was that the agency had rejected sponsorship requests from young filmmakers to accompany their films to the Berlin International Film Festival and participate in the Berlinale Talent Campus. What was shocking was that this practice was still happening after years of reform, in the context of the presidential "mental revolution" slogan, and film now being located under the new Creative Economy Body (Badan Ekonomi Kreatif), established under the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Joko Anwar accused government officials of "having the same attitude as in the past."[5] Many in the film community remain deeply skeptical of the Indonesian government and its commitment to supporting the film industry beyond rhetoric, but it also speaks to how the film industry has grown and developed in the absence of, and in spite of, government assistance.

3. "Kagak ada yang pernah denger namanya, Cuy! . . . Contohnya, siapa artis Sarah Astriani dan Waliani Achmad May? Dan siapa pula 'pengamat film' Tini Afianti?"
4. J. Ksatria, "'Berlinale Gate', Menguak Korupsi Kemenbudpar: The Untold Story," Kompasiana, February 16, 2015.
5. "Masih bermental yang sama seperti dulu." Joko Anwar, Twitter, February 2, 2015. https://twitter.com/jokoanwar/status/562497936378961920.

Pop Culture: Going Mainstream

This book has argued for a reconsideration of Indonesian cinema as part of the broader pop cultural landscape. Rather than focus on the normative *film nasional* or an over-emphasis on the state, seeing film as pop culture acknowledges that film is the product of interactions between makers and consumers within a particular national, economic, and social context. Pop culture may be dismissed as inconsequential in Indonesia, but it is in pop culture that the mainstream is defined and debated. This has allowed us to see how the film industry grew over the decade since 1998, and how over that time feature films have become mainstream. Pop culture allows us to do away with the expectations that *film nasional* demands of cinema to see what is emergent on screen. The open market conditions after 1998 lead to a cinema that is much more closely aligned with the tastes and fantasies of its makers and its audiences. If anything, this is Indonesian cinema. As pop culture, Indonesian cinema provides insight into the workings of post-authoritarian Indonesia. Indonesia is a country that is growing in stature and power in the South East Asian region which now boasts a dynamic and flourishing cultural scene. Here we find that democracy is alive and well in Indonesia, and that a dynamic and creative polity is emerging to shape politics and culture in the region. May its cinema continue to grow, informing, entertaining and challenging how we think about Indonesia and its people.

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INDONESIAN CINEMA after the NEW ORDER

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In *Indonesian Cinema after the New Order: Going Mainstream*, Thomas Barker presents the first systematic and most comprehensive history of contemporary Indonesian cinema. The book focuses on a 20-year period of great upheaval from modest, indie beginnings, through mainstream appeal, to international recognition. More than a simple narrative, Barker contributes to cultural studies and sociological research by defining the three stages of an industry moving from state administration; through needing to succeed in local pop culture, specifically succeeding with Indonesian youth, to remain financially viable; until it finally realizes international recognition as an art form. This "going mainstream" paradigm reaches far beyond film history and forms a methodology for understanding the market in which all cultural industries operate, where the citizen-consumer (not the state) becomes sovereign.

Indonesia presents a particularly interesting case because "going mainstream" has increasingly meant catering to the demands of new Islamic piety movements. It has also meant working with a new Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, established in 2011. Rather than a simplified creative world many hoped for, Indonesian filmmaking now navigates a new complex of challenges different to those faced before 1998. Barker sees this industry as a microcosm of the entire country: democratic yet burdened by authoritarian legacies, creative yet culturally contested, international yet domestically shaped.

Thomas Barker is associate professor and head of Film and Television at the University of Nottingham Malaysia. He was previously a visiting researcher at National Chengchi University, UCLA, and Universitas Indonesia.

Cover image: Director Riri Riza and cinematographer Yadi Sugandi look on as Dian Sastrowardoyo and Nicholas Saputra laugh on set of *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta? 2* (*What's Up with Love? 2*, Riri Riza, 2017), the sequel to the hit 2002 film. Used with permission of Miles Films.

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